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A Note from the Rector of Swiss Institute of Cultural Diplomacy:

“Dear Colleagues,

Several months ago we published articles on culture and art via social media. Now, we are proud to present them officially in the first issue of our journal covering education, culture, and diplomacy. We expect the second issue of the Journal February 2022 and It will be a special edition on “Culture and Identity”.

Enjoy!

Karina, Princess Bagration PhD.

EDITORIAL

By Huib Wursten, MBA,

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The first issue of International Journal of Education, Cultural, and Diplomacy by Swiss Institute of Cultural Diplomacy offers its readers reflections on the subject of how to relate the two concepts Culture and Art, which are mostly seen as separate issues.

The godfather of empirical culture research, Geert Hofstede, makes a distinction between culture in the narrow sense in which the concept is only used when referring to arts such as music, painting, and literature.” Culture” in the broad sense applies according to Hofstede to collective ways of acting, thinking, and feeling which make up the core of soft skills, aptitude and cross-cultural diplomacy. Hofstede and Minkov define this as: “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others”. This means that culture is not encrypted in people’s DNA. It rather represents the result of subconscious learning influenced by parents, teachers, and other important societal influences in the environment of children. Hence, “Culture”, as the collective programming of the mind, expresses itself in several ways. Schematically, we can distinguish several “layers” of culture: symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. To be compared to the layers of an onion. Symbols representing the most superficial, and values the deepest layer). The metaphor of an iceberg could be used to describe how the layers affect the outside world. The deepest and most fundamental layer, Values, is below water level and invisible. The other layers are visible, but rest on and are “steered” by the invisible structure below.

In the media, these different layers are separated “by the box”. For example, “Culture” sections in daily newspapers feature articles on performing Arts, movies, and literature. Value-driven discussions about Identity wars and Critical Race theory are however found under “Politics” or “society”. In this sense, it is interesting to look at the subdivision found at the American news website “The Daily Beast”. Their subdivision of “Arts and Culture” is “*STYLE, SEX, MEDIA, AND THE STAGE*”. Let’s agree, such strict separation narrows the sense of how interconnected these issues are.

Therefore, the purpose of the special Culture and Art issue is to explore the connection between the narrow and broad definitions of culture. It includes international studies, ranging from Africa, Europe to Japan. However very divers, three main elements unite them:

1. The influence of one of the core dimensions of culture, “Individualism versus Collectivism” on art and artists.

In the article “Reflections on culture, Art and Artists in Contemporary Society” it is shown that both contemporary art and politics are highly influenced by Individualism as a cultural phenomenon. We can trace how Individualism, as such, is leading on one hand, - to a focus on self-expression and subjective perceptions of society. But on the other hand, - to awareness of diversity, equal rights, and Identity. It is stated that for artists nowadays to be seen as “relevant” there is pressure to tune in on political issues like race and inequality.

Carel Jacobs in “The vulnerable human being” research wrote a cultural anthropological study on the life and work of Vincent van Gogh. In this richly illustrated article, he shows that the crucial choices Vincent van Gogh made and in his choice of themes are influenced by “Individualism” the focus of subjective impressions of reality and “Femininity”, the sympathy for the underprivileged.

2. The opposite of this cultural continuum, Collectivism, is the focus in “In search for a philosophy of African Art” research. Arthur d’Ansembourg states that if we wish to reflect on (traditional) African philosophy and art, we should make a distinction between art as an aesthetic object and art as a cult object. One needs to understand, that what we call Art was originally created to establish a relationship between man and the higher world of Gods, spirits, and ancestors. This raises, according to the author, the question of whether we can understand African sculptures and masks as works of art.

Another contributor, Jan Vincent Meertens, also pays attention to Collectivism. In his “A journey to Macondo” he demonstrates that “High Context communication”, as a reflection of Collectivism, is affecting the style of Garcia Marquez. He explains that “face”, politeness strategies, and reluctance to openly oppose authorities are all elements that make it difficult for readers from North-Western Europe and North America (in the words of the editor, Individualistic cultures) to understand the complexity of the plot, heroes and actions.

3. The possibilities of Art in creating empathy for other cultural groups and their values, Meertens asks: “Will outside readers ever be truly able to crawl under the skin of the author, challenging their own cultural preconceptions?”

Wursten writes: “if we say that others can never understand the position and perceptions of others it would kill civil societies, because, if it’s true, we should admit that we would never understand, let go appreciate, literature, movies, music, paintings and dance from other cultures. Isn’t it true that it is human nature that we are able to empathize with others? If so, certainly we can also appreciate perceptions, perspectives, and the points of view of others. Art

helps us to do this! It allows us to create a multilayered emotional appreciation. It elevates our understanding beyond the point of view of a merely detached spectator”.

Jacobs describes the effects of van Gogh’s time in London: “Vincent is also confronted with the downside of the turbulent economy. The traditional English class society is rapidly transforming into a society with “haves and have nots”. He sees poverty in the streets and is impressed by writers such as Charles Dickens, who denounce social injustice in his various novels, abject poverty, and interrelation between them. Deep in his heart he undoubtedly wonders, whether his social motivation lies with the less fortunate. I

In his paper Arthur d’Ansembourg warns however that we have to be careful. To reach a deep understanding of artist’s works and avoid superficial analyses, we need to know the cultural background of artists. He writes: “An interesting and problematic attempt to present European and traditional African art was the exhibition: “Primitivism” in 20th-century art. This exhibition was organized by the Moma in 1984-85 and the subtitle of the exhibition was: Affinity of Tribal and Modern Art (Rubin, 1984). The visitor was invited to experience African statues and masks exhibited together with the modernist works of Picasso, Matisse, and Dubuffet. At a first glance, it appeared that the non-Western artist was equal to the Western artist. There was a dialogue established between the forms of non-Western pre-colonial art and the avant-garde art of Western modernity. Yet, interestingly enough, the exhibition tried to show how Western artists were inspired by the style of the African sculptures and masks. The viewer gained insight into the way in which the development of Western art was influenced by pre-colonial African art. At the same time, we see that African art is qualified as primitive in comparison to modern art. Thus, another culture is presented as underdeveloped in comparison to the works of artists who are part of the Western avant-garde. We also see that the sculptures and masks are detached from their original ritual context. The works fascinate us because of their aesthetic qualities but were originally created to establish a relationship between man and the higher world of gods, spirits, and ancestors. This raises a legitimate question, whether we should perceive African sculptures and masks as works of art or, we actually extend them as a special code system enabling us to understand their art as a mentality.

De Groot quotes Valentin Okorokov: “Without art, without beauty, our life would be poor, dull and devoid of emotion; even the human soul would suffer some form of degeneration.”

Let me summarize with his words: “the fact is, though, that Art has been saving us all since March of 2020 when Covid-19 broke out. Think about it: books, videos, Netflix, social media, sculptures, poetry, paintings, dance, concerts, all these visual and performing arts “kept us sane”. All other conclusions, are for you to make!

IN SEARCH FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF AFRICAN ART

By Arthur d' Ansembourg, Drs., Philosopher affiliated with the Vrije Academie Amsterdam and the International School of Philosophy (ISVW) in Leusden. E-mail : (Upon Request).

Synopsis: the article examines the obstacles and possibilities of African art philosophy. It addresses the problem that the words “philosophy” and “art” have a Greco-Roman origin. For a long time, philosophy was understood as rational argumentation and art as an aesthetic object. This was a determining factor for the rise of a Eurocentric orientation of Western philosophy and art history. If we want to reflect on (traditional) African philosophy and art we might have to look for a broader concept of philosophy and make a distinction between art as an aesthetic object and art as a cult object. From this point of view, I will reflect on the question if - and in what sense - we can find in the “Ifá” divination of the Yoruba in Nigeria a philosophy that can help us to understand the traditional artworks of the Yoruba.

Key words: African Philosophy, African Art, Yoruba, Aesthetics, Ritual Cult, Mythology.

When we communicate with people from other cultures, we tend to lock ourselves in our own cultural identity with all its prejudices. Especially in the realm of politics and social life we see all too often how this leads to a defense of our own national and regional interests and we lose sight of our common interests. However, according to the well-known 18th-century philosopher Immanuël Kant, the experience of beauty is a moment of having no interest in the object, a moment of so-called disinterestedness and therefore offers a basis for mutual understanding (Kant, 2009). People can disagree about everything, but when we really experience something as beautiful, we can trust others to agree. Therefore, there is a basis for commonality in the aesthetic experience of beauty. For that commonality to really have meaning, it can - in my view - only exist thanks to a recognition of what is strange and different. This applies not only to our conversations with people from other cultures but also to our possibilities to philosophize about non-Western art in general and (traditional) African art in particular. Our concepts of philosophy and art have a Greco-Roman origin and concern European ways of thinking and looking at art. It remains a question therefore whether there is such a thing as an African philosophy of art. I want to elaborate on this question on the basis of a reflection on the Western view of traditional African art. An interesting and problematic attempt to present European and traditional African art was the exhibition: “Primitivism” in 20th century art. This exhibition was organized by the Moma in 1984-85 and the subtitle of the exhibition was: Affinity of Tribal and Modern Art (Rubin, 1984). The visitor was invited to come and experience African statues and masks that were exhibited together with the

modernist works of Picasso, Matisse, and Dubuffet. At first glance, it appeared that the non-Western artist was equal to the Western artist. There was a dialogue between the forms of non-Western pre-colonial art and the avant-garde art of Western modernity. The exhibition showed how Western artists were inspired by the style of African sculptures and masks. The viewer gained insight into the way in which the development of Western art was influenced by pre-colonial African art. At the same time, we see that African art in this exhibition is qualified as primitive in comparison to modern art. Thus, another culture is presented as underdeveloped in comparison to the works of artists who are part of the Western avant-garde. We also see that the sculptures and masks are detached from their original ritual context. The works fascinate us because of their aesthetic qualities but were originally created to establish a relationship between man and the higher world of gods, spirits, and ancestors. This raises the question for me whether we can understand African sculptures and masks as works of art and what we actually mean by the word “art”.

If we look at the traditional African statues, masks, and fertility symbols, it is striking that they are handcrafted, but that there is no word for art in the language of their makers. For example, the Bamana in Mali speaks of “Jiri Manni” and this means “figures of wood”. The images they make do have aesthetic qualities but have a religious function for connecting to gods, spirits, and ancestors. The word “art” is easily used in our contemporary Western culture and we regularly come across it in all kinds of reviews of exhibitions we visit. But as soon as we reflect on it for a moment, it becomes clear that the word is not unambiguous. In French and English, we use the word “art” which comes from the Latin “ars” and relates to the ability to make something. That is why our word art is also connected with skill and we can also speak about the “art of skating”. In this context, the word art points to the skills and techniques one needs to learn to place the skates in the right way on the slippery ice to gather speed.

This link between art as a skill and the mastery of techniques is also reflected in the Greek word *technè*, which was used for the craftsmen who had the techniques and skills to build ships or create works of art. The works of art they made not only served for aesthetic enjoyment but often had a ritual function as well. We know the replicas of *The Discobolus* (450 BC) of Myron that tell us about the lofty beauty of the Greek athletes. But we easily forget that Olympia was a holy place with many temples, altars, and statues. *The Spear-bearer* of Polykleitos is believed to represent Achilles. Artists sought for a beautiful aesthetic design and searched for a balance in motion and rest or tension and relaxation, but the images were still mainly related to the life of the gods and heroes. Although the arts in our modern time mainly have a secular function, for centuries they primarily played a role within a religious context.

That changed in the Renaissance and we see that art then takes on much more aesthetic meaning. The religious function of art becomes less important and the work of art became an object of aesthetic enjoyment (Belting, 1994). Although Michelangelo's "Pietà" can be seen in St. Peter's in Rome, it is admired in the works of Vasari and others for its aesthetic qualities. These are later - in the 18th century - also the central focus in the aesthetics of Kant. He explores the nature of the aesthetic experience that is characterized by a sense of aesthetic well-being. It is accomplished by objects that stimulate the viewer's imagination to create forms that harmonize with the concept produced by the understanding (Kant, 2009). In this playful relation between imagination and understanding, the work of art has finally detached itself from its religious context and has become part of the exclusive domain of the fine arts.

This view has led to the idea that art exists for its own sake. Not only works of l'art pour l'art artists of the 19th century, but also the works of many of the avant-garde artists of the 20th century are autonomous. They were not in the service of any religious or political purpose and referred only to themselves. Hence, the modern understanding of art is fundamentally different from the kind of art that functioned for centuries in a religious context and had the character of a cult object.

If we look at the difference between a statue of Mary in a church and that same statue in the museum, it should be clear that it acquires a completely different meaning in the different contexts. The statue of Mary in the church functions within a ritual context and is aimed at a community of believers. The image creates a relationship with a higher power and invites the viewer to pray. When we transfer the same image to a museum context, it becomes independent and addresses an individual in a secular society. The viewer will not kneel before the statue but will be invited to aesthetic contemplation. The original ritual character of the traditional image is lost. We can read about it, but no longer live in a time that enables us to experience the magical powers they originally carried with them.

This also means that our modern understanding of art, in general, is useful for understanding the works of art that were made from the Renaissance to the modern era, but not so much for a dialogue with pre-modern and non-Western cultures in which one created cult objects that had aesthetic qualities, but mainly functioned in a ritual context. While the exhibition "Primitivism" in 20th-century art presents with the best of intentions the affinity of the aesthetic qualities between African masks and avant-garde works, it ignores their original meaning. They turn to their aesthetic qualities, deprive them of their cult character and thus they are colonized. We may speak of African art, but with the realization that these cult objects functioned within a mythological worldview and invited the viewer to enter into a relationship with gods, spirits and ancestors. The problem is that the

visitor to the exhibition in the Moma is part of a secular and scientifically oriented society in which the work of art was conceived as an aesthetic object for a long time. If we want to philosophize about African art and look for an African art philosophy, this is hindered not only by our own aesthetic understanding of art, but also by our understanding of philosophy. Like the word “art”, the word “philosophy” also has a Greco-Roman origin. Philosophizing about non-Western art may therefore be trapped in a Eurocentric perspective from the outset. It is, therefore, necessary that we examine whether there can be such a thing as African philosophy and ask ourselves what the word ‘philosophy’ can mean in a non-Western context?

It is therefore important to consider the prevailing view that Western philosophy arises from a break with Homer's mythological worldview. The Homeric Greeks lived from a belief in gods whom he was able to appease with the help of sacrificial and divination rituals. In overviews of the history of Western philosophy, Thales of Miletus is often presented as the first philosopher who went in search of a rational explanation of phenomena in nature and the cosmos as a whole. After him, other natural philosophers continued to build on his thoughts and we gradually see that - certainly from Socrates onwards - people are looking for rational insight into matters surrounding truth, beauty, and goodness.

In the Middle Ages, philosophy served religious purposes. It was based on the truths revealed by God in the Old and New Testaments. In the Bible, people found answers to all life questions. Philosophy had the task of making these beliefs understandable with the aid of concepts and arguments. From Augustine until after Thomas Aquinas philosopher's complex logic systems were developed to prove the existence of God and the accuracy of the Christian dogmas.

From Descartes on, philosophy acquired not only a rational but above all a systematic, methodical and scientific character. He was looking for an indisputable basic truth from which all other truths could be deduced in a systematic way. With this in mind, he developed his experiment of doubts. In it, he showed that if one questions everything that could be true, then one has the certainty that there is someone who thinks and therefore exists. Thus, the famous statement: “I think, therefore I am” became the starting point of modern philosophy. If one wants to understand what is true, beautiful, or good, one will no longer consult the truths revealed by God, but the insights of the thinking subject. This scientific approach of philosophy will continue after Descartes and achieved its height in the philosophy of Hegel in the early 19th century.

In the further development of philosophy in the 19th and 20th centuries, we see that many philosophers have reservations about the rational character of philosophy. Nietzsche in particular questions the rational character of philosophy, but his philosophy cannot be understood as a return to a

mythological worldview of gods, heroes, and rituals. His criticism of Christian morals and proclamation of the death of God paved the way for a secular culture. Instead, he wants to make room for a philosophy in which the aesthetic experience of Greek tragedies come into play. Although Apollo and Dionysius play a central role in his early thinking, they primarily have a metaphorical and aesthetic significance.

This means that Western philosophy to date assumes a difference between philosophy and mythology. From Nietzsche on, however, philosophers begin to radically question the view that philosophy can only be understood as systematic, methodical, and rational argumentation. Attention is paid to various forms of rationality. This broadens the concept of philosophy and contributes to discussions about whether poetry and mythology can also be understood as forms of philosophy. Do the poet also a philosopher or do they - as Heidegger says - live on separate mountain peaks (Heidegger, 1996).

Here we encounter tricky issues that I will not elaborate on in the context of this article, but if the poet and the philosopher live on separate mountain peaks, then - although the mountain peaks are connected by a valley - this also implies a separation between philosophy and mythology (since the latter was presented in poetic form by Homer and Hesiod). And if we want to maintain this division between philosophy and mythology to this day, it means that non-Western cultures in general and African culture - with its mythological traditions - in particular, have no philosophy and thus we cannot speak of an African art philosophy? It is a question that has been the subject of much debate in recent decades and is interwoven with a reflection on the Eurocentric character of Western philosophy.

Insofar as the word philosophy is associated with a rational tradition that forms the basis of our modern Western culture, it remains to be seen whether it is suitable to use in a discussion of (traditional) African art. Interesting is the work of the Nigerian philosopher Omatade Adegbindin on "Ifá" (Adegbindin, 2014). He is affiliated with the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and "Ifá" is a corpus of orally transmitted texts that tell about the mythological worldview of the Yoruba, a people with a unique language and way of life in Nigeria and Benin.

Its history begins with the establishment of a kingdom in the eighth century with "Ifé" as its capital and a number of city-states that recognized the power of the king of "Ifé". They lived with a mythological worldview that is described in the *Ifá* texts, that were transmitted orally for centuries and were gradually written down. The texts were used in sacrificial rituals and by diviners who advised and predicted the future. Even today they continue to play an important role in the lives of some of the Yoruba in Nigeria. According to Adegbindin, the "Ifá" texts not only tell us about gods

and fortune tellers, but they contain a philosophical system of thought with an ontology, a view on the human soul, a theory of knowledge, and ethics. In this way, he also offers a starting point for a philosophical reflection on the meaning of African art.

I will get into that further below, but for now, it is important that “Ifá” always has been seen as a religious and mythological text that tells about the highest God Olodumare. He ordered the gods below him to create the world according to his guidelines. The text tells about the fortunes of the different gods such as: Obatale (god of the sculptors), Ogun (god of iron), Sango (god of thunder), Yemoja (goddess of water and fertility) and Òrúnmìlà (god of the wisdom and truth) who guided the creation of the world by the gods.

According to the Nigerian philosopher Sophie Bósèdé Olúwolé, Òrúnmìlà was a philosopher who - like Socrates - has left no written works. His “Ifá” teachings were passed on orally for centuries. Only after his death, he was deified and also many of his disciples were elevated to gods or ancestors and played their specific role in the “Ifá” corpus of oral texts that were written down later (Oluwole, 2018). Unlike Homer’s epic poems, the “Ifá” text does not belong to a distant past that no longer exists, but plays an important role in the present-day Yoruba community and the practice of divination. If one is confronted with an illness or has doubts about the path to take in life, one goes to the Babalawo (fortune teller) who creates a ritual setting and then throws his palm tree nuts. Depending on how the nuts fall, the Babalawo places a single or a double line in the sand on the divination board. This creates a figure that corresponds to a particular “Ifá” verse that is interpreted by the Babalawo in the light of the question of the person seeking an answer to his question. Several African philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu, Odera Oruka, and Paulin Hountondji, emphasizes that this mythological worldview has nothing to do with philosophy. Wiredu writes: “African philosophy exists in the form of folk philosophy, but offers no basis for a modern philosophical the program” (Wiredu, 1972, as cited in Adegbindin, 2014). Odera Oruka makes a distinction between ethno-philosophy, which takes the form of a collective worldview described by anthropologists, wisdom-philosophy of some talented people in the African community and the national-ideological philosophy of Leopold Sedar Sengor. The last one founded the Négritude as a movement of black there is the “professional philosophy” which has a systematic character and is developed at the universities in Africa and other parts of the world (Adegbindin, 2014).

Paulin J. Hountondji belongs to the latter group and criticizes the ethno-philosophical approach. According to him, ethno-philosophy has a colonial character because it glorifies a pre-modern past. This provides exotic folklore for the tourism industry and hinders the development of African society. Philosophy must look for scientific and universal points of view that have a cultur-

ally transcendent character. In doing so, he turns the discussion about an African philosophy into a discussion about rationality. He conceives rationality as the ability to deduce logically and verify on the basis of a set of methods to develop knowledge (Adegbindin, 2014, see also Imbo, 1998).

According to him, philosophy has a rational and critical character. Philosophizing means that one arrives at universal insights on the basis of logical arguments. Since every human being has the ability to think logically, philosophy is a universal affair and there is no such thing as a European or African philosophy. According to him, traditional African thinking is a way of thinking that is based on belief in incomprehensible forces and this cannot be understood as a form of philosophy. In his book on the “Ifá” thought system Omotade Adegbindin regularly criticizes the view of Hountondji. He points out that a kind of dogma has emerged in Western philosophy that philosophy begins with Thales of Miletus. His philosophical ideas about nature were understood as a break with Homer's mythological worldview and the beginning of a rational explanation of reality. Adegbindin emphasizes that philosophy is a universal human need to find an answer to fundamental questions that every human being faces in his life. According to him, it is therefore quite nonsensical to say that the Greeks would not philosophize before Thales (Adegbindin, 2014).

For this reason, he points out that we also encounter the word “Sofia” (wisdom) in the work of Homer and Hesiod. They were poets who expressed poetic wisdom in their work. Much more so than later with Plato and Aristotle, the word “Sofia” were associated with a form of practical knowledge that plays a role in the different skills that people develop. Moreover, we see that Thales and other pre-Socratic philosophers believed in the existence of the gods. Although they began to play a different role in philosophy, they were never completely absent in the thoughts of Socrates and Plato. We also see that rational argumentation plays an important role in the works of Plato, but that the ultimate insights about the highest ideals of the truth, the beautiful, and the good are presented in allegorical narratives. Hence, the strict division between philosophy and mythology is not tenable even in the West.

Although the division between philosophy and mythology has been questioned since Nietzsche, we see that it contributed to a Eurocentric view in which rational scientific thought was seen as superior to so-called primitive mythological thought, with its belief in magical powers. The idea that philosophy can only be understood as scientific and systematic argumentation culminated in Hegel's philosophy. He believes that reality should be understood as an expression of an absolute spirit that is absorbed in life and develops a conscious relationship with itself throughout the history of mankind.

For that reason, he understands all developments in art, religion, and philosophy in different cultures as stages in which the absolute spirit is active and always achieves a higher form of consciousness. In his lectures on the history of philosophy, he describes how the absolute spirit develops in the collective consciousness of Eastern, Greek, Roman, Christian, and German culture. Particularly in Hegel's own philosophy, the absolute spirit becomes conscious of itself. According to him, nothing can be thought beyond the collective consciousness of the different cultures he described. In reading his work one gains an understanding of the totality of knowledge that becomes conscious of itself throughout history. What stands out in Hegel's description of history is that he sees the emergence of colonialism (16th century) as a necessary moment in the development of the absolute spirit in European history. It is also striking that he states that Africa is not part of this development. Africa, in his view, is the unhistorical and undeveloped spirit, which is still entirely contained in pure nature and which can only be presented at the threshold of world history. According to him, African people live entirely in nature and have no history. They do not have a moral and political system with written laws. The African, therefore, lives as a "natural man in his wild and untamed state" (Hegel, 1956, p. 93 as cited in Kuykendall, R., 1993). Hence, according to him, the African man is difficult to understand. If we are to understand him, we must "set aside every thought of reverence and morality". We also read: "among Negroes, moral feelings are rather weak, or more specifically formulated, nonexistent" and "The undervaluation of humanity among them reaches an incredible degree of intensity in the African" (Hegel, 1956, as cited in Kuykendall, R., 1993).

According to Adegbindin, this shameful view of African culture has everything to do with the dominance of a way of philosophizing that aims to be rational, systematic, and scientific. However, he emphasizes that we should pay more attention to different forms of rationality. The idea of scientific rationality itself arose in a certain cultural-historical context and for that reason alone cannot be universal. This means that we have to start from context-dependent rationality. If Hegel believes that African thinking is irrational, he is ignoring that it is impossible to survive with an irrational system of thought.

African thinking, according to Adegbindin, is held together by a number of beliefs that enabled African people to navigate their way through the problems in our lives. The answers Africans found to their life questions were discussed by Òrúnmilà and passed on to subsequent generations in a coherent corpus of oral texts. These texts provide insight into the beliefs and moral values of the Yoruba. If we then want to philosophize about "Ifá", we are confronted with the problem that they developed in a pre-colonial time. African man lived with a belief in the mythological world of gods, demigods, demons, and ancestors. The question then arises whether we are able to access

that world with our secular background. To gain some insight Adegbindin leads his readers through the “Ifá” thought system and he shows how it contains a philosophical system of thought. The question then is to what extent the “Ifá” can also help us to gain insight into the philosophical questions and views that lie behind the art of the Yoruba in pre-colonial Africa. Do we find clues for an African art philosophy in the “Ifá”?

The work of Adegbindin shows how the mythological worldview in the “Ifá” of the Yoruba testify to a philosophical system of thought that is elaborated in an ontology, a view on the human soul, a theory of knowledge and ethics (Adegbindin, 2014). I would only like to draw attention to the ontology of the Yoruba and then examine how it helps us to arrive at a better understanding of the art of the Yoruba. This could give us also an impetus for an African art philosophy.

The ontology concerns traditional questions about the nature of reality and develops a theory of beings. Adegbindin begins in his book with a discussion of how ontology was handled in the Western tradition. Plato believed that reality was divided into two distinct domains. He sees the visible world as a shadow of a higher world of abstract ideas. In the everyday life, we see people, tables, and chairs around us and they respond to the idea of man, table, and chair. These ideas have an independent and abstract existence in a higher reality. Such ideas are characterized by being eternal, immutable, and perfect. This implies that the idea of a man was already there before there were people, and if one day there are no people left because of a catastrophe, then the idea of man would continue to exist. Within the world of ideas, the ideas of the truth, the beautiful, and the good are the highest ideas. Since visible reality is a shadow of the higher world of ideas, we find in everything that exists a certain degree of truth, the beautiful, and the good. This attempt to find an answer to the question about the nature of things is repeated in the Middle Ages from a Christian perspective. The perfect idea of the good is replaced by the omnipresence of a perfect God expressing himself in his creation. That creation is flawed, but everything in it points in his direction. This means that the relationship between Plato’s perfect ideas and the deficiency of visible reality is resumed in the relationship between the perfection of God and the imperfection of the created world.

It shows that the classical philosophical texts in the Western world assume a certain relationship between the sensory and the super-sensory. According to Adegbindin, we find a similar relationship in the “Ifá” of the Yoruba. Just as Plato starts from the relationship between the world of perfect ideas and the sensory world and Thomas Aquinas from a relationship between God and the created world, so the Yoruba start from a relationship between heaven (orun) as the abode of the highest God Olodumare and the remaining 400 deities, spirits and ancestors, and the earth (aye) with all people, living beings, and other visible things. The state of affairs within the visible world is determined by invisible forces at work in this world (Adegbindin, 2014). According

to a Yoruba saying, “the earth world (aye) is a marketplace we visit, but the other higher world (orun) is our home” (Drewal, Pemberton III and Abiodun, 1989). The visible world is part of a larger whole where we are in our sleep and dream states. Heaven with its gods, spirits, and ancestors operates in earthly reality.

As in the Western tradition, the domain of the super-sensory and the sensory is not separated. An important difference is that the super-sensory world is not understood as a world of abstract ideas that one can think, but as a whole of life forces that manifest themselves in everyday life.

According to anthropologist and art historian Henry Drewal, we must therefore understand the African gods and spirits as actualizations of life forces at work in the everyday world (Drewal et al., 1989). When a sculptor makes a statue, a healer is healing someone with herbs or when a violent storm breaks loose, then there is always a higher power (ase) working in the earthly life. At first glance, they appear to be magical powers, but they become understandable when we consider how, for example, Sango, the god of thunder, can be understood as a force that manifests itself when we are enraged by injustice taking place. Or when we recover from a disease, we experience the power of Osanyin, the god of healing. Knowledge of the relationships between the different gods that play a role in the “Ifá” worldview then provides insight into the forces at work in the world in which we live.

Besides the fact that the gods, spirits, and ancestors speak to us through the divination ritual, they are made tangible in images and masks. The images are most of the year in a shrine where they receive sacrifices, and during ritual festivities with masked dancers, they are carried around. From the perspective of “Ifá” ontology, we must understand them as objects that connect the super-sensory world of gods and spirits to the earthly reality and they actualize the life forces operating therein. According to Lawal, we can distinguish between two types of art. On the one hand, there are the so-called “ayajora” and on the other hand the “aroya”. The first concern realistic images of deceased persons. The second spring from the imagination and concerns the invisible gods and spirits (Lawal, 2001). There are different types of ayajora and amongst them are life-sized clad bodies sitting in a chair. They were made for a second funeral ritual that took place a few days after the first burial of an important person. The statue was then carried around in a procession with music, song, and dance. Thereafter it was buried and able to accompany the deceased during the crossing to the other world. In addition, there are life-size bronze heads of former kings (probably) for a coronation ritual. They have a different function from the terracotta heads that were made in memory of a distinguished person. Also are their terracotta figures with swollen heads found. The latter probably played a role in sacrificial rituals designed to protect the community against contagious

diseases. These realistic images have aesthetic qualities, but mainly have a ritualistic meaning and connect the transcendental world with the earthly world of the senses (Lawal, 2001).



Yoruba copper mask for King Obalufon II; circa 1300 AD; copper; height: 29.2 cm; discovered at Ife; Ife Museum of Antiquities (Ife, Nigeria).

These naturalistic images are different from the aroya that have a conceptual nature and originate in the human mind. They are an expression of the essence of a being or the soul of a deceased person and are placed on or near a shrine. They are often based on a mixture of historical and mythological aspects. So the equestrian figure is a representation of a Yoruba king Aláàfin Òfinràn, who lived in the 14th or 15th century. He gained his kingship through spectacular victories in battles with other peoples. Legend has it that he managed to defeat his enemies thanks to severe thunderstorms that he was able to summon through magical practices. After his death, he was deified and his essence was summed up in an image of Sango, the god of thunder, who as a warrior not only destroys but offers safety and protection to his people (Lawal, 2001). Such aroya statues are cult objects that actualize and make tangible the presence of the gods. They make it possible for supersensory forces to operate in physical reality. They were mainly made of wood, but also in stone and ivory. They are stylized figures with the six specific basic postures of standing, sitting, horse-riding and kneeling, carrying, and balancing. According to Thomson, different postures point to the movement of dance (Thomson, 1979). The statues are carried around during ritual festivals with masked dancers. Especially interesting are the Epa-masks in which the mask is connected with a statue on top of the mask. The weight of the Epa-mask can be up to 30 kg and was worn during an intensive dance of more than 15 minutes. It is a superhuman achievement that is only possible

thanks to great concentration and the right rhythmic accompaniment that puts the dancer in a kind of trance. During the dance, the presence of a god is actualized and made tangible. Although there are great differences within traditional African art and we know little about the changes and shifts that have occurred in the development of African art, we can conclude that not only the art of the Yoruba, but also, that of other African peoples often had a ritual function. The makers of statues and masks did have an eye for the aesthetic qualities, but the work of art was primarily a cult object that was used to evoke higher powers and thus activate and operate vital life forces.

An Afro-centric philosophy of art may well reflect on the aesthetic shape, but would - unlike the aforementioned exhibition - have to find its starting point in the vital life forces that manifest themselves in the masks that are worn during a ritual dance and the statues that reside at a shrine. While the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant reflected on the nature of the aesthetic experience, the (traditional) African art demands further reflection on the nature of the vital life forces that the dancer and his public experience in the ritual performance. The characteristic of the aesthetic object is that it stands on its own and the viewer is asked not to touch it, but to contemplate it in silence. According to Kant, they are an expression of an aesthetic idea that gives a lot to think about and about which we never get thought out. The cult object, on the other hand, does not invite contemplation. It rather wants to create a physical sensation of vital forces in a ritual performance accompanied by song and music. In a photograph from 1975, we see a priestess dancing with a dance staff that represents Sango, the god of thunder and lightning. During the performance with the dance staff, the spirit of the deity is evoked and the priestess enters into a trance state. Initially, the dance is playful and becomes more and more concentrated, but after a while, the movement of the feet stops, and the whole body starts to vibrate. The priestess enters an ecstasy that allows super-sensory life forces to be present. Her dance is described as a “kikan kikan”. “Ki” stands for a fast-upward movement and “kan” for a powerful and heavy drop of the shoulders and torso. This releases powerful energy that refers to the dynamics of lightning and thunder (Drewal, 1986, p. 66). It implies that further elaboration of an African philosophy of art requires not only a reflection of the nature of life forces. Although Adegbindin provides more general insight into the way in which the “Ifá” speaks about the workings of the super-sensory in physical sensory reality, it would be important to reread the “Ifá” texts from the point of view of how the super-sensory works specifically in cult objects. This also calls for further reflection on the way in which concepts such as the incarnation, ecstatic possession, and transgression play a role in the “Ifá” texts. Moreover, a similar reflection should take place from comparable texts of other African peoples.

In conclusion, the above quest for an African art philosophy was linked to the Moma exhibition “Primitivism” in twentieth-century art and this brought us to the need to dis-

tinguish between the work of art as a cult object and aesthetic object. If we want to philosophize about (traditional) African art, it not only requires a different understanding of the arts but also a reflection on the word philosophy. Since its inception with Thales van Miletus, philosophy has been conceived primarily as rational argumentation that considered itself superior to poetic insights central to the mythological worldview. This has contributed to a Eurocentric view. If we want to break through it, then - according to Adegbindin - a broadening of the current understanding of philosophy as rational argumentation is needed. Philosophy is then understood as an existential quest for an answer to life questions. From that perspective, we have made acquaintance with the ontology in the “Ifá” text of the Yoruba. They tell us about the way in which super-sensory forces operate in the everyday world and thus offer starting points for a better understanding of the art of the Yoruba. We can pay attention to the aesthetic qualities of the works, but in order to better understand their meaning, it is important to pay attention to the way vital life forces are actualized in the cult objects of the Yoruba. The artwork can then not be understood as an object of aesthetic contemplation, but rather functions as a place where life forces are called for in a ritual dance or want to be nurtured during sacrificial rituals. A further search for an African art philosophy, therefore, requires not only a study of the mythological worldview of other African peoples, but also a further reflection on concepts such as incarnation, ecstatic possession, and transgression.

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REFLECTIONS ON CULTURE, ART AND ARTISTS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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Synopsis: great thinkers like Goethe, Hegel and Voltaire introduced the concept of *Zeitgeist* which refers to “The spirit of the time; the taste and outlook characteristic of a period or generation”. They analyzed the way artists are both, influenced by and influencing, the “Spirit of the time”. This paper aims to tie this “spirit of the time” with the cultural framework found by Geert Hofstede (Hofstede 2010). This framework is the reflection of repeated worldwide empirical research. In the author's opinion, one of Hofstede’s 4 fundamental value dimensions stands out when looking at *Zeitgeist* and its influence on contemporary art and that is “Individualism”. It will be shown that this value dimension originally had its roots in Europe and was important in influencing the *Zeitgeist* in European countries and the countries that were developed mainly by European immigrants. The development of Individualism and its consequences for art will be described in 6 steps. The first 3, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the end of the 80-year war between Spain and the Netherlands are shown to lead to an emphasis on the individual as a critical autonomous actor. Who, as a result, was encouraged to independently investigate the world and to look critically at what worldly and religious authorities were saying? The 4th step is the big turning point

that came about during the time of big inventions, roughly between 1850 and 1930. On one hand, photography made it possible to make a far more exact copy of reality than could ever be achieved by other means. On the other hand, people like Freud showed that the unconscious had an enormous impact on so-called conscious and rational behavior. Einstein made concepts of reality even more questionable by the relativity theory. As a result of this artists were turning their interest from objective realism and aesthetics to the way individuals are subjectively experiencing reality. The 5th step in the development of Individualism is the emphasis on equal rights for all individuals (and minority groups) as formulated in the Universal Declaration of Human rights. It 'legalized' independent thinking and the legitimate right for all to demand equal treatment. Repressed individuals realized that their condition was being associated with the specific minority group they belong to and identified with (for example) women, people of color, different sexual preferences, etc. As a group, they started to claim their right to be seen and recognized. The 6th step is a strong focus on "diversity" and "inclusion". Equal recognition for all repressed minority groups and their right to express themselves affect the new Zeitgeist. The paper gives examples of how contemporary art is influenced by this 6th step. Lastly, I seek to answer whether this Zeitgeist is a global issue or mainly something that concerns countries with a high score on Individualism.

Keywords: Contemporary Art, Culture, Individualism, diversity, inclusion.

In my work as a consultant in Intercultural Management the challenge is to align people from different countries and to make it possible for them to work on common tasks. This is not at all an easy task because of the different value systems the countries in the world include different visions on leadership, motivation communication, assessment, and accountability. In a series about management Gurus, The Economist (Economist 2008) pictured the leader in the field of Intercultural research Geert Hofstede. He was quoted saying: "(Country) Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster." Interviews with experienced managers confirm this. PWC, an international consultancy company, ranked the problems of international managers and found that cultural differences are mentioned as the second most serious challenge. Apparently, it is hard to understand, let go accept, the symbols, heroes, rituals, and values of cultures other than your own. Is it impossible? Definitely not! It is possible to empathize with others from far away and living long ago. Art is one way to achieve that. I realized this at a very specific moment. I was in a minibus from my hotel in Denver USA to the Convention hall where Barrack Obama was to be officially announced as the Democratic presidential candidate. Two white women in the bus said to the 3 men in the bus, (myself (being white) and two African Americans)" You can never understand how sad we are that Hillary Clinton has not been chosen as Democratic Presidential candidate!". I needed some time to think about this remark. Then I an-

swered “but if this would be true, you are also saying that we can never understand, let go and appreciate literature, movies, music, paintings, and dance from other cultures. Isn’t it true that it is a human faculty that we are able to empathize with others?” If so, certainly we can appreciate perceptions, perspectives, and the points of view of others. Art helps us to do this! It allows us to create a multilayered emotional appreciation. It elevates our understanding beyond the point of view of a merely disconnected spectator. The French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said “ce que j’ai le plus en horreur c’est le pauvre rôle du spectateur”. Translated: “What I abhor most is the poor role of the spectator”. Art can enrich the general understanding of the human condition by showing all kinds of unexpected and surprising angles. In this way reading, James Baldwin taught me about what it means to be black in the USA. The choreography of Ze’eva Cohen made me feel what it means to be in the shoes of biblical females from long ago. A movie like *Ran* made me feel like I was a Japanese person living centuries ago. This understanding of Art was recently expressed in a book review in the *New York Review of books* (Lambert Josh 6 Oct. 2020) “that books could ‘enlist the sympathy of all’, even the most rigidly orthodox, and even the most wildly radical” and “form a meeting point of intellectual kinship to those who, on religious and doctrinal grounds, are most wildly and bitterly disaffected”. Wikipedia defines art as a diverse range of human activities involving the creation of visual, auditory, or performing artifacts (artworks), which express the creator's imagination, conceptual ideas, or technical skill, intended to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power. The 3 classical branches of visual art are painting, sculpture, and architecture. Music, theatre, film, dance, and other performing arts, as well as literature and other media such as interactive media, are included in a broader definition of the “Arts”.

Empirical research on culture underwent a major paradigm shift in the mid-20th century. In the past, the usual research was done by anthropologists going to a village in a different culture to live there for a long period of time trying to describe what they saw while participating and observing daily life. After writing a paper or a book about such a community they did not dare to generalize their findings to a village 5 kilometers further because they were afraid of stereotyping. Hofstede changed all that. Working for a multinational corporation he was interested in why certain (HR) policies formulated by HQ for the whole organization worldwide were predictably successful in certain cultures and not in other cultures. Because the multinational had strict function classification systems worldwide, he could compare the preferences employees had everywhere on policies with matched samples. By using (for instance) factor analysis, he could find the 4 fundamental sources of these different preferences. The way people accept hierarchy as an essential fact of life or is just a matter of convenience in organizing a group or community. This is defined as the “Power Distance”. The direction of loyalty. In collectivist cultures, people prioritize loyalty to the “ingroup”

they belong to (extended family, tribe, ethnic group, religious group, etc.) whereas in Individualistic cultures people are putting the rights of the individual first. The direction of motivation: a preference for competition (masculine cultures) or a preference for cooperation and consensus-seeking (feminine cultures). The need for predictability. The continuum goes from a strong need for predictability to a weak need for predictability. For a good understanding, it is not a binary division, but a continuum. Described by the central tendency of a bell curve per nation it concerns the majority culture. Minority cultures have to define themselves in relation to the majority culture. The majority culture defines the criteria for the right or successful behavior. The position of about 150 countries on this continuum is now charted. It is not a one-time finding. The Hofstede research has been repeated several times by others who tried to falsify the findings. A meta-analysis shows that the repeat results are consistent over the +/- 50 years since Hofstede's first conclusions. The latest major research found that the scores of 2 "Dimensions" are very slowly changing across the board. Everywhere the scores for power - distance is getting lower, the scores for Individualism are getting higher. The relative distances between countries are however not changing. That is, worldwide we are moving in cohorts. The scores are describing the majority values of Nation States. Nation States (See notes) are recent in time, going back only 2-3 centuries. The Nation States are important in shaping values because of the educational policies of a nation and the influence of the national media. Wursten shows that country cultures cannot be understood by the separate dimensions. "The whole is more than the sum of parts. It is the combination of the 4 dimensions that create these "rules of the game". (Wursten 2019). These "rules of the game" influence almost everything relating to societal issues, including the shape of the institutions in a culture.

The question is how is the culture influencing Art? Is culture a defining force in the choices artists are making? Does it explain the "schools" of artists that we can identify over time? It is here that a concept like "Zeitgeist" is coming into the picture. Great thinkers like Goethe, Hegel and Voltaire introduced the concept of 'Zeitgeist' or 'the spirit of the time' which is the taste and outlook characteristic of a period or generation. They analyzed the way artists are both, actively influencing and are influenced by, the "Spirit of the time". This paper is an attempt at trying this 'spirit of the time' with the cultural framework of Geert Hofstede. Art is of course from all times and all cultures. From an intercultural perspective, it is clear that all Hofstede dimensions are relevant to understand the values behind manifestations of human behavior. This is true for economic policies, for the way people shape democracy as well as policies of Nation States in fighting Covid-19 (Wursten 2004, 2020). In this paper however only one of these elements, Individualism will be highlighted predominantly because of its influence on contemporary life and art in Western Societies. The art world recognized this early on. Oscar Wilde wrote that "Art is individualism and individualism is a dis-

turbing and disintegrating force” (Wilde 1891) Joseph Brodsky, the American-Russian poet once said, “the surest defense against Evil is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsically and even-if you-will eccentricity. That is, something that cannot be feigned, faked, or imitated. This is a concept that even a seasoned imposter wouldn’t be happy with” (Brodsky1986). First an overview of the characteristics of the 2 sides of this sliding scale, Collectivism- Individualism.

| COLLECTIVISTIC SOCIETIES |
|---|
| “We” conscious |
| Identity is based in the social system |
| Opinions predetermined by group |
| Fulfill obligations to family, in-group, society |
| People try to avoid the loss of face |
| Value standards differ for in and out-groups: Particularism |
| Emphasis on harmony among members of the in-group |
| Friendships pre-determined by stable social relationships |

| INDIVIDUALISTIC SOCIETIES |
|---|
| “I” conscious |
| Identity is based on the individual |
| Private opinions are acceptable |
| Fulfill obligations to self-actualization |
| People try to avoid the loss of self-respect |
| Value standards should apply to all: - Universalism |
| Emphasis on autonomy and diversity |
| Need for specific friendships |

The hypothesis in this paper is that Individualism is the dominant drive behind manifestations of contemporary art. First explosive observation from the scores we have in our database: only a few countries in the world score as Individualistic. These countries are the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, The Netherlands, Belgium France, Germany, Austria, and the Scandinavian countries. In short, what the media call “the Western world”.

Now, a few words on collectivism and art. One of the most important attributes of collectivist cultures is that the identity of an individual is defined by the group. Profiling yourself as an independent autonomous individual makes others feel very uneasy. As a loyal group member, it is expected that an individual does not have opinions and behavior not in line with the group opinions. Keeping harmony and avoiding loss of face is the norm. Art has two major functions in Collectivist cultures the first is to maintain the identity of the ingroup (tribe, ethnic group, religious group) by

showing the symbols, heroes, and rituals of the group. Additionally, Artists, especially in the more traditional countries, are mediating between strong external forces like Gods, spirits, forces of nature, ancestors, and the community convictions. To do so they have “sacred” time-honed rituals, dances, and songs to mollify the forces. (Ansembourg, A., d' ,2017). Masks have a special meaning in this. Masks are worn by the mediators frequently to represent the external forces. The mediators are not showing their individual identity. Mostly they are not even called artists, they are viewed as craftsmen. In contemporary collectivist cultures art with masked performers is still highly popular. An example is Kabuki and the use of masks in theatre. A Japanese colleague and I recently visited a Kabuki performance in Tokyo. Because we shared an interest in Art, we discussed Kabuki, a traditional Japanese kind of theatre-going back to the Edo period. We discussed especially the painted faces in Kabuki and the use of masks in related Art expressions in Japan like No and kyogen. In general Kabuki theatre shows historical events known as “Jidaimono”. Moral conflicts between families and in romance are known as “sewamono”. “Shosagoto” puts emphasis on dance, with or without dialogue, where dance can be used to convey emotion, character, and plot. The masks and painted faces show stylized recognizable forces and emotions.



We analyzed the similar way masks were used in Greek culture and the significance of the Greek label “Persona”. Persona in Greek drama refers to a stylized mask to convey to the audience



the personality traits of a particular character being portrayed (for example the king, soldier, wise old man, young girl, etc.).

As already indicated, the empirical research into cultures by Hofstede started around 50 years ago. It is difficult to have reliable data before that time. Still, it is possible to see where in history this loyalty to the individual developed. Six periods are highlighted to show the increasing importance of Individual and self-reliance. Let's summarize some of the characteristics

of these periods:

1.Attributes of the Renaissance: this period was marked with the re-discovery of the Individual. During this period the focus in art is on attributes of the individual and not as just an anonymous representative of a community. There was also a sense of reality, leading to a focus on the “here and now” (and not the “here after”) and Nationalism, the striving for a national state and administration. There was also a big influence on Classical culture. “Citizens and Cities” gained influence in comparison with nobility, clerics, and the countryside. The creation of beauty was emphasized in Art (rather than honouring God)

2.Attributes Enlightenment: here there is an emphasis on asking the individual to independently and critically investigate and not to take for granted what religious and worldly authorities were saying. There was also an emphasis on rationalism and optimism, that is, one can find truth and solve all problems. Voltaire and Rousseau are some famous examples of that time.

3.The end of the 80-year war between Spain and the Netherlands (1609): the 80-year war (between 1568 and 1609) was the war of Netherlands independence from Spain, which led to the separation of the Northern and Southern Netherlands and the formation of the United Dutch Republic. The Dutch Republic was the most wealthy and urbanized nation in the world at the time. Its wealth was for a big part based on the domination of the global trade market by the Dutch East India Company. This led to an urban middle class with disposable income to purchase art. The separation between Catholic Spain and the mainly protestant Netherlands created a complete change in the Art world. The absence of liturgical paintings and statues in the Protestant Church meant that religious sponsoring was no longer a source of income for artists. Artists had to start selling on an open market and rich citizens replaced the Catholic church as the main customer. This meant that artists could create an individualized style.

4. The time of disruptive new ideas. European turbulence between (roughly) 1850 and 1930: Halfway through the 19th century, new ideas about life, science, and Art started developing in Western societies. As a result of the ideas of the enlightenment, the general mood was one of rejection of conventional morality. It was seen as leading to conformity and limiting creativity. During this time Artists started questioning academic art for its lack of freedom. “Mimesis”, (the literal imitation or representation of the appearance of nature, people, and society) had always been the norm. Art was judged on how well it reflected reality. For artists of that time, this was too limiting and did not reflect the new outlook on life. Freud and Einstein had radically changed people’s perception of reality. Freud challenged old concepts of the human psyche and showed that unconscious and repressed forces are influencing our perceived, rational behavior. Einstein taught us that his relativity theory was also shaking the fundamentals of our old beliefs. A philosopher of that time, F. H. Bradley, introduced the concept that an object, in reality, can have no absolute contours but varies based on the angle from which it is seen. Bradley defines the identity of a thing as “the view the onlooker takes of it” (Bradly 1893) . A very important invention, the camera, helped to change the idea of Mimesis. Realism and portraiture were served by this new medium. This challenged artists to look for new ways to express themselves by focusing on subjectivity. They started developing works that were so personal that they even distorted the natural appearance of things.

The Impressionists were the first group by whom the identity of an artist as master of his own expression came to be realized. Monet, Manet, Matisse, Renoir, Cezanne are famous examples. After impressionism, there has been a rapid succession of schools of painting, thought, and styles. Self-realization and authenticity became the highest level of motivation.

The focus on self- realization enables the acceptance of expressing unique individual perspectives. In painting, Picasso is appreciated for showing faces in an unusual distorted and innovative way. Choreographer Ze’eva Cohen when writing about her life in dance said “My goal as a young artist, and throughout my long career in dance, has been to find my individual voice as a human being in relation to the larger world and not feeling boxed in by Jewish memory and culture. She adds “The first time I was challenged to find my authentic voice as a choreographer occurred during a class with Sokolow in the spring semester of my senior year. To the class’s great disappointment, Anna found all our compositions to be derivative. She told us to get rid of our “well-made dances” and suggested that we go to a quiet space and stand there for as long as needed until we found the first movement that felt true to who we were” (Cohen 2021).

5.Human rights: the individual and the new morality: All individuals have equal rights. In short, this value system leads to a strong belief in “Universal Human Rights” for all individuals and minority groups regardless of religion, color, gender, or sexual preference. The focus on human

rights addresses a basic problem concerning moral behavior after the Enlightenment. Under the influence of the scientific focus, the dominant groups in Individualistic cultures defend the idea that there are no valid methodologies to decide whether one value system is better or truer than another. It is all relative and depends on “where you are coming from” in your reasoning, whether it be revelations in holy books, the teachings of enlightened people, or trying to find explanations in human nature, etc. This, “postmodernism” approach, however, could lead to absolute relativism and bring society to the brink of anarchy. The solution for individualist cultures is to adopt “Universal Human Rights” as the point of reference. This is reflected in the rule of law in these countries.

6. Diversity, Inclusion and Art: One of the consequences of Individualism and the focus on equal rights is the emphasis on previously repressed minority groups and their claim on identity. Including the message that these have not been taken into account in the past and demanding to be seen and respected. Also, in the way, they express themselves in Art. The heated discussion on “appropriation” is to be understood in this respect. The thinking is “Stay away from our Symbols, Heroes, and Rituals because these are defining our suppressed identity”. So, the interesting consequence of Individualism is that there is a growing interest in expressions from minorities like African Americans and the LGBTQ communities. Even for a suppressed group of about 50% of the population, women. A potential dilemma is evolving, the danger that diversity and inclusion are leading to ‘Prescriptive Art’. This is a concept minted by the British historian Richard Overy (Overy2005). It is the name he gave to Art that was not produced by spontaneous artistic expression but of forced ideology and state-coercion. Art in this concept should not be self-expression but should illustrate and strengthen political ideology. Overy used the Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung of 1937 with pastoral landscapes and heroic portraits, and Soviet exhibition” Industry of socialism of 1939 with muscled workers as examples. The danger is the conviction of past leaders in authoritarian countries that the artist is not creating for the artist, but for the population. “We’ll see to it that the population will be called to judge his Art” is a statement that is rumored to be a quote from Hitler. Wieringa, a Dutch author wrote a critical analysis of the conditions for being subsidized for artistic creations in the Netherlands. He stated, “the ideology of the day is called diversity and inclusion”. He goes on to quote a conclusion of the committee responsible for reviewing and approving these subsidies as saying “We are on the right track. Specifically, these institutions choosing for a healthy introspection of their artistic course and their position in the field show also to be able to manage inclusivity and diversity as well as to be able to present attainable plans.” Wieringa adds sarcastically: “I think it is the opposite. He who is able to stress the right words in the proposal gets the money whatever the artistic course” (Wieringa 2020). This attitude has not stayed unnoticed. David Brooks of the New York Times wrote “My colleagues at T Magazine had a

very good idea. They gathered some artists and museum curators and asked them to name the artworks that define the contemporary age — pieces created anywhere in the world since 1970” (Brooks 2019). Brooks continues: “Most of the pieces selected are intellectual concepts or political attitudes expressed through video, photographs, installations, or words. There almost seems to be a taboo now against capturing states like joy, temptation, gratitude, exaltation, betrayal, forgiveness, and longing” Most of the artists have adopted a similar pose: political provocateur. The works are less beautiful creations to be experienced and more often political statements to be decoded. The general attitude is: Let’s smash injustice with a sledgehammer. What you see when all these works are brought together is how the aesthetic has given way to the political, how the inner life has given way to the protest gesture. “Brooke concludes: What’s missing from most of these pieces is human contact and emotional range”.

1.Refelections on contemporary art, Zeitgeist and Individualism

1.1 Art for Art’s sake and relevance:

Recently I had a discussion about this issue with the former head of the dance program and Professor emeritus of Princeton University, Ze’eva Cohen. We agreed that Artists can just be driven by aesthetics and the fun of creating something. ‘Art pour l’art’. Moreover, it is true that among artists the accepted opinion is that many of them are ‘prescient’. They advance the thinking and awareness of their time and the best of them (mostly), have the courage to say and show the unspeakable and extend the consciousness of the public into neglected or unseen realities or ways of doing things that the general population eventually catch up with and feel like progress. This means that artists are frequently willing to take the consequence of not being recognized or appreciated in their time. The passion for what they do supersedes their need for materialistic comforts and financial success. The other side is that for artists, an important condition for success is to be seen as “relevant”. This relevance has to do with the societal/political discourse in a country. In short “the Zeitgeist”. And, as we argued already, this is determined mainly by the consequences of nowadays ‘Individualism’. The reality is that there are many happy artists who are doing beautiful work and are lucky enough to be seen as relevant and appreciated in their time. This is however not only luck!

Many artists nowadays are consciously trying to influence the perceptions of the general public. Lingo and Tepper (Lingo, E.L; Tepper, S, J. 2013).In their report on trends in the art world pointed out that Artists are increasingly getting interested in actively marketing and promoting their work in society. They conclude that the divide between “arts for art’s sake” artists and commercially successful artists is not as wide as may be perceived, and that “this bifurcation between the com-

mercial and the noncommercial, the excellent and the base, the elite and the popular, is increasingly breaking down”. They discovered that arts graduates name “business and management skills as the “number one area (they) wish they had been more exposed to in college”.

1.2 Networks of influence and recognition:

Some years ago, I visited the New York Museum of Modern art with my friend, the New York painter Avri Ohana (Ohana NDA). I must add a disclosure: most of the paintings in our apartment are made by him. Looking at the works represented in the museum we had a discussion as to why none of his work is to be found there. Two main answers came up. The first one was that if as an artist you don’t relate to the political struggle of minority groups you have a disadvantage in exhibitions nowadays. The so-called “identity wars” leave their mark on the choice of themes that are seen as relevant by museum directors. But of course, there is more. In art, where quality is difficult to define in an objective way, reputation and networks of influence play a key role in determining access to resources and rewards. In a revealing paper the research findings of who is shown in exhibitions and who is not were summarized. The authors explain: “we reconstructed the exhibition history of half a million artists, mapping out the co-exhibition network that captures the movement of art between institutions. Centrality within this network captured institutional prestige, allowing us to explore the career trajectory of individual artists in terms of access to coveted institutions”. Their conclusion: “Early access to prestigious central institutions offered life-long access to high-prestige venues and reduced dropout rate. By contrast, starting at the network periphery resulted in a high dropout rate, limiting access to central institutions” (Samuel P. Fraiberger, et al. 2018).

1.3 How universal is this Zeitgeist?

That leads me to the next question- how universal is this Zeitgeist? How global are these developments? Are not a lot of assumptions in so-called “global” discourses biased because of the dominance of a few Individualistic cultures? Even without the awareness of the people concerned?

First an example from the theatre world. Author and playwright Paul Binnerts (Binnerts 2018) He describes 3 developments in postmodern theatre culminating in a very individualistic approach “real-time acting” which authorizes actors to determine how a story is told. Binnerts calls this ‘The Actor as Eyewitness’. He puts this in the context of the acting conventions initiated by Stanislavski psychological realism and Brecht - epic theater and the technique of alienation. Stanislavski taught that the actor should not purely imitate emotions but should try to play as if the emotions are real. To do so he should delve into his emotional memory and the technique of identification. Brecht stated that “a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action”. Rather, it should provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the

stage in order to recognize social injustice and exploitation and to be to change in the world outside. For this purpose, Brecht employed the use of techniques that remind the spectator that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself. One of the techniques is described as “Verfremdungseffekt” or the alienation effect. Brecht wrote that this involved “stripping” the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity about them”. To this end, Brecht employed techniques such as the actor's direct address to the audience, harsh and bright stage lighting, the use of songs to interrupt the action, explanatory placards and speaking the stage directions out loud.

Binnerts goes even further. He writes: “real-time actors should clarify the dramatic actions and not illustrate. The actor in real time shares the action of creating his personality with the audience. He does not leave his identity in the dressing room; he takes it with him on the stage”. Real-time acting is, according to Binnerts, about seeing and being seen. The actor “stays on the stage without blinding spotlights and in a setting where he is not in the frame of a traditional stage. The actor has mutual eye contact with the audience. This is the beginning of direct communication, that is the actor gives the audience the opportunity to look through his eyes into the soul of the personality he is playing”. It is clear that this focus on the actor's timesharing the action of creating his personality is understood and appreciated in individualistic cultures. But the question is how universal is this appreciation? Binnerts gives an example in his book of a Japanese actor panicking about the direct confrontation with the audience. Forgetting his text and unbalanced, the actor exclaimed “I can see them, and they can see me!” This is of course no surprise. In collectivist cultures like Japan, people dislike direct confrontation. To avoid disharmony and loss of face, indirect communication is preferred. Sometimes referred to as “High context communication”. Direct communication is preferred by Individualistic cultures. As a result, “straight talk” is appreciated. This is uneasy for collectivist cultures. According to Bennetts, the Japanese actor, however, after a period of time, got used to the exposure and could work accordingly.

It analyzed the way Individualism, one of Hofstede's 4 fundamental value dimensions, stands out when looking at Zeitgeist and its influence on contemporary art. It also demonstrated the way this value dimension developed in Europe and was important in influencing the Zeitgeist in European countries and the countries that were developed mainly by European emigrants. Countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. In the database of Hofstede all these countries score high on Individualism. The question now is what this would mean for the appreciation of Art in Collectivist countries. By far the majority of countries in the world. The central thesis of this article is that it is an all-human faculty that we are able to empathize with others. Art enables us to appreciate the perceptions, perspectives, and points of view of others. It allows us to create a multilayered

emotional appreciation. The limits and possibilities of this function of Art were at the core of two separate recent discussions in the movie world. Both were about Individualistic perspectives versus Collectivistic perspectives and the possibility of understanding each other. Both were about the USA versus China.

The first one was initiated by Lulu Wang criticizing the choice of an American, Ron Howard, as director of a film about a Chinese classical pianist Lang Lang. This film is based on Lang's memoir, "Journey of a Thousand Miles." It shows his development, growing up as a musical wonder child in Shenyang, China, on a path to global superstardom. Wang tweeted (Wang, 2020) "As a classically-trained pianist born in China, I believe it's impossible to tell Lang Lang's story without an intimate understanding of Chinese culture + the impact of the Cultural Revolution on artists & intellectuals + the effects of Western imperialism," "I'm not saying this because I want to direct this movie. I do not. I just don't think these are the artists to grapple with the cultural specificities of Northeast China where Lang Lang (and my family) are from. Or with the cultural aspect of the physical violence in his upbringing." Lang himself however disagreed and referring to a universal human experience said: "Dream big, work hard, and always believe in yourself. This movie, thanks to Ron Howard's vision, will inspire young people around the world to follow their dreams and never forget they are one in a million."(Hollywood reporter 2020).The strongest support for this "universal" approach came from the surprising Oscar for Chloé Zhao as best director, Zhao, a woman raised in China, showed that filmmakers can see and share the truth of communities unlike their own. She got the Oscar for her film Nomadland. Portraying the life of a lady who leaves her hometown in the US after her husband dies and the construction materials company, she is working for closes down. She lives in and travels in a van around the United States. To conclude, I would like to mention that the success of Zao teaches us that "cultural identity" alone cannot predict who is able to see and share the truth. The conclusion of this paper is expressed best by Nadia Gill (Gill 2021), an award-winning producer and co-founder of encompass Films. She said: "Some abilities are hidden from plain view: They are of the heart and the mind. If we wish to create a rich environment for storytelling that enhances our understanding of communities that are not our own, we would be wise to care more about the filmmaker's character than their identity".

In conclusion, I would like to state that this research, started by referring to the possibility of art to create empathy for the feelings and expressions of other cultures. Gradually, it was clearly shown that artists are both influencing the "Spirit of the time" and influenced by it as a result.

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A JOURNEY TO MACONDO (Will outside readers ever be truly able to crawl under the skin of the author, challenging their own cultural preconceptions?)

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Synopsis: Whereas literature provides the native reader with an entertaining narrative and food for thought, it provides the non-native reader with a unique sociocultural perspective of the community in which the novel has been set. In this paper I examine how—and to what extent—

cultural differences create distance between the original literary creation and the interpretation by the outside reader. Here I use García Márquez's novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude" as the material for analysis and explore why readers from North-western Europe and North America might lose sight of what is implied and of what is left unsaid. This article discusses the novel in the light of high- and low-context cultures, intercultural communication, face theory, politeness strategies, and translation strategies. The article shows that an unbiased interpretation by a reader with a different cultural background than the author of the novel is not possible, but that having more knowledge about the context of the novel and an awareness of one's own subjectivity may help the outside reader to go beyond a mere surface-level interpretation.

Key Words: low- and high-context cultures, intercultural communication, face theory, politeness strategies, culturally based preconceived notions, translation strategies, High-context Culture, Subjectivity, "One Hundred years of Solitude", magical realism, circularity of time, social propriety, languages.

Ever since its publication in 1967, "One Hundred Years of Solitude" by Gabriel García Márquez has attracted a large, diverse, worldwide audience. The novel is recognized to be a masterpiece in Spanish literature, at the level of Cervantes' Don Quijote. In order to comprehend García Márquez's novel, we need to understand the world in which he wrote it: a world in a state of perpetual turmoil. The revolutions of the early 20th century across Latin America gave rise to dictators and tyrants. Popular rebellions resurfaced after World War II, but the world was different from times Spanish ruling was shrugged off. The region was caught in the crossfire between capitalist and communist powers which actively supported rebel factions. The result was a continual rise and fall of military leaders, many of whom violated the human rights of their citizens and even undertook ethnic genocides against Amerindian populations. This often happened on behalf of exponents of the capitalist world, such as the United Fruit Company. One Hundred Years of Solitude can be seen as a ciphered satiric allegory of the birth and development of Western Civilization since its very inception; of its extension to Latin America by Spain; and of its "evil" manifestations and developments in Colombian history" (Meckled, 1982). Nobel Prize laureate García Márquez used magical realism as a literary device to expose the areas of reality that many in Colombia have chosen to forget or ignore. He reclaims history and his use of magical realism helps to question the epistemological issues of the history we have been taught. García Márquez has created an image of his land, country, and continent, and given it a name: Macondo. And that image is generally seen to be so coherent, so poetic and persuasive, and above all so successful, that it has become a collective identity. It is an image of Latin America in which the inhabitants of this vast and diverse continent recognize each other, with inhabitants identifying as the descendants of the lineage of the Buendía and

the sons of Macondo. This article provides a discussion of the limitations facing the reader who is not a native or resident of Northern Colombia, the ‘outside reader’ to grasp the full context of the novel. I have analyzed the novel in the tradition of historical and comparative philology and have reviewed and included many articles and studies written about the author and the book. By working along the divides of high- and low-context communication, we will be better able to understand the author’s and reader’s perspective(s) and subjectivity. I will try to illustrate the broad context within which the novel was written as well as which cultural, epistemological, and linguistic barriers the outside reader will face when interpreting the story of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. We will discuss the specific regional context of the novel: Northern Colombia, with its indigenous, African and Spanish influences as well as García Márquez’s childhood, education, early career, and the influences under which he developed as an author and under which the highly contextual narrative of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was conceived. I will then review how not only the lack of historical and local knowledge but also the lack of cultural and linguistic proximity separates the outside reader from the mind of the creator of Macondo. The questions at hand are whether an outside reader will ever truly be able to crawl under the skin of the author, let alone the characters in the novel, thereby challenging their own culturally-based preconceived notions? Whether native Spanish speakers from other regions and non-native Spanish speakers can read the original version and gain the same contextual information as people from Northern Colombia? And, whether people reading in translation being from a high-context or a low-context culture, will gain the same contextual information as people from Northern Colombia or will they be limited to interpret the novel through the translator’s and their own cultural lens and enjoy the journey to Macondo if only with a tourist gaze?

High-context Culture Communication is a process that involves numerous steps widely researched and described in academic literature. Written communication, including storytelling, is one of many forms of delivering information. The storyteller creates an idea of what he or she wants to share and transforms his or her thoughts into words that will transmit the meaning. The reader converts the information into his or her “own” meaning. This decoding is subject to subjectivity. We read things as we are¹, driven by core cultural values, our answers to basic social dilemmas. Scholars including Benedict (1959), Mead (1962), Inkeles, and Levinson developed the conviction that all societies, modern or traditional, face basic social dilemmas; only the answers to the dilemmas differ. Two of these predicaments have been widely seen as the most influential on the style of communication: the dilemmas of how to deal with authority and how to deal with the relationship between the individual and society. These two dilemmas can be linked to two contrasting communication styles introduced by anthropologist Edward Hall in his book “*Beyond Culture*” (1976). He

distinguished the “high-context” style and the “low context” style. Hall argued that some cultures prefer communication through inference and implied ideas (high-context), while other cultures entertain more explicit, low-context, communication. Hall differentiates entire cultures along this dimension of communication, from high- to low-context. Hofstede (2010) argues that one driver of high-context communication is collectivism. In other words: high-context communication is preferred in societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into, strong cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 2010 p.92).

Another generally accepted dimension of high-context communication is high power distance, defined by Hofstede (2010) as less powerful members of society expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Low-context communication, in contrast, is preferred in more egalitarian societies, with a lower degree of power distance. (Meertens, 2017). In these societies, people tend to have many connections, but each connection serves a specific purpose and lasts a shorter duration of time. Rules of interaction will vary more in a low-context situation. Expectations of behavior will be spelled out more explicitly with less inference required on the part of the listener. It should be noted that there are other cultural dimensions that have an impact on the way a community is developed and how people communicate with each other. Overlapping or contrasting gender roles will impact status, solidarity, and many more aspects of social cohesion and communication. Uncertainty avoidance, the lack of tolerance for ambiguity, will have an impact on, for instance, anxiety, rules, and style of thinking. Low-context communicators tend to, based on the belief that there is always objective truth, emphasize logic and rationality. This allows for an inductive and linear, monochronic, process of discovery.

High-context communication will contemplate an issue with circular logic, polychronic and deductive thinking, accepting that there may be more than just one single truth. (Würtz, 2006; Hofstede 2010). In high-context cultures, therefore, the intimate relationships, well-structured social hierarchy, and social norms serve as a broad context in which interpersonal communication takes place. Most communication relies on the physical context or is presented non-verbally, and less information is contained in the verbal part of the message such as in words, sentences, and grammar (Hall, 1976), (Paraphrased of Anaïs Nin 1961, *Seduction of the Minotaur*, Page 124, The Swallow Press, Chicago, Illinois). Putting cultures on the continuum between Hall’s high-context and low-context provides a useful framework for our discussion. Anglo-Saxon and North-western European cultures reflect a preference for low-context communication (Gudykunst et al 1987). What you hear is what you get. Latin American, Asian and African cultures generally favor high-context communication (Hofstede, 2010). Members of these societies are perceived by low-context communicators

as more introverted and indirect, and often more difficult to “read”. Latin and Eastern European and the more modern urban societies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America prefer a communication style that holds the middle between high-context and low-context, depending on the relationships between interlocutors and the background against which the communication takes place. Colombia, in particular, rural 20th century Colombia can be regarded as high-context. Its culture is accepted to fit the high-power distance and collectivistic traits. The mix of indigenous, African, and Spanish heritage reinforces the need for intricate, highly contextualized communication patterns. It is within this complexity of divergent cultures that García Márquez and the reader of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* interact with each other. Readers from low-context cultures can be expected to have more mental distance to the novel than those from high-context cultures, even if they have knowledge of the official history and awareness of the “subhistorical history” as described by Howe (2001). Subjectivity Three insights of cultural philosophy are important in order to relate to and understand somebody from a different culture. First: our ways of being, our ideas, and our convictions are not universal nor transhistorical. Second, our thinking is based on a number of fundamental propositions; core values that influence our worldview and the way we act. Third, the subject, the I, is part of and a product of an environment, a tradition, and a variety of interactions with other beings. Therefore, approaching reality from a completely neutral or objective point of view is impossible (Gadamer, 1960). Heidegger describes the process of understanding a text hermeneutically.

In everyday life, we are not interested in an objective understanding of our situation but interpret it through the larger cultural-historical context of which we all belong. It is therefore not a matter of freeing ourselves from this circular structure of interpreting our situation but accepting this circular structure of existence in the right way (Heidegger, 1971). Gadamer says that our core beliefs function as prejudices with which we face the world. Because the hermeneutic experience has a circular structure, our interpretation of a work of art tells us something about ourselves. Understanding something is always a form of understanding oneself. In our explanation of the world, we always take ourselves and our historically determined context with us. An unbiased interpretation is therefore not possible. The quality of an interpretation is determined by the extent to which one knows how to make the guiding prejudices explicit and dares to put them at risk (d’Ansembourg, 2017).

One Hundred Years of Solitude Art is one aspect of culture and the creative expression of one’s experiences, emotions, and other qualities. Works of art created by society are a product of the culture that prevails within that community. Art and culture are interlinked (based on Hofstede and World Value System data). In this article, we focus on the novel in the context of culture, the ensemble of social forms, material traits, customary beliefs, and other human phenomena that can-

not be directly attributed to the genetic inheritance of a religious, racial, or social group. Examples of cultural features that can be found in the literature are proverbs; idioms; formulaic expressions; social structures; role and relationship; customs; rituals; traditions; festivals; beliefs; values; superstitions; taboos; metaphorical and connotative meanings and humor. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is full of words, references, behaviors, and situations that cause emotions in the reader and touch upon his own value orientations. Emotions will range from “understanding” to “bewilderment”, from “acceptance” to “rejection” and from “joy” to “repulsion”. Some sources of these emotions can cause opposite emotional reactions, depending on the larger cultural-historical context of which the reader is part. Readers will feel different emotions when interpreting climatic conditions in the novel. “Summer” will evoke sentiments of joy and comfort to the many readers living in North America and Europe. Macondo, however, has a tropical climate with summers of smoldering heat and humidity. With “winter” (Invierno) locals refer to the sparse but heavy rains that wash away the heat and dust, albeit for just a few hours. These rains, these “winters”, are cherished by the locals. The novel has political, historic, institutional, and economic references which, in the context of the target culture, may not be as they seem to be to an outside reader. Any reader of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* will benefit from being aware that the official account of the history of the country is not that of those who lived it and that the author provides a glimpse through the eyes of the Buendías. Irving Howe describes this historical context as follows: “García Márquez wishes to capture all that gradually slips out of memory and can perhaps be regained only through myth: he wishes to preserve the “subhistorical history” of his people as they try to preserve themselves in the midst of endless civil war, what gives this novel its quotient of ferocity is the repeated intrusion of the sterile official history, the often ridiculous politics, and civil wars, juxtaposed to the fertile “subhistorical myth”, as a sort of comic transcendence (Howe, 2001). The novel is permeated with the colonial history of Northern Colombia and Latin America in general. The colonialization of what today is been referred to as Latin America resulted in the blending of three distinct worlds: the native American, the European, and the African. Native American culture became permeated with many different cultures, languages, and spiritualities from the other two worlds, with the African heritage occupying the least prominent place.

During the colonization process, often understood to be the encounter between two worlds, African elements were denied and erased. Exoticizing and degrading these representations was rooted in slavery and the forms of racial classification and hierarchy that were created in the 15th and 16th centuries by Spain and Portugal and reworked by Northern Europeans thereafter (Bush, B. et al, 2018). All civilizations have a tendency towards domination, and the stronger the civilization, the more clearly this tendency will appear. “The cause of the exceptional brutality and cruelty that

typified whites was not only the lust for gold and slaves that consumed their minds and blinded the ruling elites of Europe, but also the incredibly low standards of culture and morals among those sent out as the vanguard for contact with Others. It is bound to cast a sad shadow over our relationship with the Others, to shape our common views about them, and to fix stereotypes, prejudices, and phobias in our minds that sometimes still appear in one form or another to this day.” (Kapuscinski, 2008). García Márquez, the descendent of the Spaniards, was deeply inspired by the Wayuu, an ethnic group of the arid Guajira Peninsula (Saldívar, 1998). The group is known to have never subjugated to the Spanish explorers, leaving the two groups in a permanent state of war. The process of evangelization of these, what the Governor described as “barbarians, horse thieves, worthy of death, without God, without law and without a king”, took until 1942 when Christmas was celebrated by the Wayuu for the first time. The Wayuu have long protected their traditional community, keeping distance from the mimetic internalization of the colonial state. However, the colonial state is at the same time the symbol and the reality of a foreign culture that is injected into the indigenous tradition. With the import of African slaves, the region became infused with yet another culture: the West African tradition. A tradition is based on the premise that the community is more important than the individual. The status of “person” is something you acquire, not something that you owe purely to the fact that you are a human being. Central to this tradition is the circularity of time, a prevalent feature in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Society is not just made up of the living, who reside in the visible world and travel there. The living dead and the not yet born are also part of society. They live in an invisible world. It is not behind our backs as a horizon for the deceased or as a frightening prospect, but this life sphere of invisible spirits regularly appears in the visible world. A person from four generations ago does keep his identity as an ancestor, but he is absorbed into the community of collective immortality. Within the network of the family or the relationships in the community, the individual experiences himself and is experienced by the community. This is the cultural basis of the principle of interdependence between individual and community and of the principle of sharing, mutual care, and compassion for the other, which are characteristic of most indigenous communities (Ramose, 2017). Another African and aboriginal cultural trait is animism, which describes the most common, foundational thread of indigenous belief systems. Animism is a particular sensibility and way of relating to various beings in the world. It involves the belief that objects such as stones or trees or rivers embody spirits: the objects are themselves the physical and material manifestations of the gods and spirits. We see the influence of animism in magical realism. Aside from the indigenes and slaves, settlers from other regions in Colombia have also reached the Northern Lands of the country to work on plantations and in mines. The settlers were often “mulatto’s” and “mestizo’s”, people of

mixed ancestry with white, black, and indigenous backgrounds. These aboriginal and disparate cultures have become deeply connected with each other and stories like that of Macondo provide an epistemological paradigm of their common past and destiny. The author: people, language and places García Márquez was influenced by the people and books surrounding him from childhood onwards (Saldívar, 1998). People of diverse ancestry, political worldviews and artistry; books by authors from Western, classical, and Latin American traditions. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* bears characteristics of all of these influences. He lived off and on in hot and temperamental coastal Colombia where he had a chance to flourish and become a “mamagallista, a prankster”; as well as in a formal Bogotá. His travels brought him under influence of many literary and political trends. In Cuba it was the Vanguardia movement known for its surrealism, its embracing of heritage as well as political ideology. He became friends with Fidel Castro. Paris provided him with the benefit of a new perspective of his birth ground. The most important thing that Paris gave me was a perspective on Latin America. It taught me the differences between Latin America and Europe and among the Latin American countries themselves through the Latins I met there. In his teens, García Márquez read the entire oeuvre of Sophocles (his closest and constant master) with the same fascination with which he had read “*One Thousand and One Nights*” at the age of nine and, later, the works of Kafka, Woolf, Faulkner, Hemingway, and Melville. García Márquez was fascinated by Faulkner and his experimental style that included meticulous attention to diction and cadence. Faulkner composed his often highly emotional, subtle, cerebral, complex, and sometimes Gothic or grotesque stories of a wide variety of characters including former slaves and their descendants, poor agrarian or working-class, white, Southerners, and Southern aristocrats. Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* caused a sensation with García Márquez. The story counterbalanced Faulkner’s enormous influence on him. “Faulkner is a writer who has had much to do with my soul, but Hemingway is the one who had the most to do with my craft- not simply for his books, but for his astounding knowledge of the aspect of craftsmanship in the science of writing.” The film *Ladri di biciclette*” (*Bicycle Thieves*) by Vittorio’s De Sica made a huge impression on him. That film brought him under the influence of Italian neo-realism, especially in terms of the aspect of the transcendent human, would form an essential element of his storytelling world. Writing articles as a young journalist was the laboratory for the contemplation and demarcation of his literary themes of love and death, loneliness and homesickness, the power in the solitude of power, the primordial times, the circularity and inertia of time, the world as an all-encompassing village, with the all-defining drama of everyday life at the center of it all. “Ultimately literature is nothing but carpentry. With both you are working with reality, a material just as hard as wood”. Macondo: The breeding ground All these people and places offered García Márquez stories, life experiences, and friendships that contributed to his growth as an author. But the essential breeding ground for his work was the history of Aracataca

and his own miraculous childhood. In light of the work of Faulkner and Virginia Woolf: his birthplace with the jasmine and haunting spirits and all the characters he lived with. The lands surrounding the town, colonized by the United Fruit Company to cultivate bananas. In the first ten years of his life, García Márquez lived with his maternal grandparents of Spanish descent. He eventually moved back with his father and after returning from a physically and metaphorically cold episode in Bogotá he faced the dangerous deception of nostalgia. However, the colonel's grandson managed to escape the trap of homesickness in a way that was poetic by creating a strong, seductive, autonomous world, in which he recalled the happy moments of his childhood alongside his grandfather and was able to preserve them unaffected by time. He reconnected with Caribbean culture and the ghost images of his childhood. He immersed in the warmth of the “vaina”, the day-to-day concerns of life. With the highly lyrical and expressive vallenatos, folk songs of Coastal Colombia blending African, European, and indigenous rhythms on the background. But he went further and also recalled the moments when he had been deeply unhappy, moments when he thought he was dying of fear: the nights cast with his grandmother's death. In fact, only in the world, he created in the image and likeness of the world he did achieve what he craved as a child: crossing the line to the world of the constantly wandering spirits around the house, reconciling with them. This state of soul, more than a state of mind, was the real place from which he had left and where he tried to return and to appropriate it in a poetic way. The stories of his grandfather, the stories of the traditions of the Caribbean coast and Aracataca , and later the pages of national history, brought García Márquez, strengthened by the Bible, Sophocles, Defoe, and Camus, to mind that his people and his country had been hounded for centuries by many plagues and disasters, such as wars, plundering of national resources, social and economic marginalization, floods, locusts, political scams, cultural rivalries, and schizophrenia. The country was torn apart by violence, the special form of political enterprise in Colombia: not as a way of living together and leading together, but as a permanent medieval epidemic. The reconnection with his roots was a crucial moment in his life because his literary career would have been very different if he had not returned in time and did not sense that creative power comes from the dark imagination of the people and that literature is born out of the fusion of the writer's talent and his home environment and its anonymous tradition (Saldívar, 1998). It all fell together, in Mexico: “One day, as we were heading to Acapulco with Mercedes and the kids, I was driving my Opel, thinking obsessively on One Hundred Years of Solitude when suddenly I had a revelation: I should tell the story precisely the way my grandmother used to tell hers, beginning with that afternoon when a kid is taken by his father to discover ice.” (E. García Márquez 2001). A story influenced by indigenous people, descendants of African slaves and colonists, vallenatos, Western philosophers and authors, and, above all, a grandfather and a grandmother who lived their “vaina” in a small hot and humid Caribbean town. Magical realism García Márquez attempts to

rewrite the recorded history of Colombia by taking into account aspects of life that were ignored such as genocide, superstition, and personal sense of drama. He is known for the magical blend of mystery and reality, magical realism, a term coined in 1925 by Franz Roh, a German art critic, to refer to the way in which post-expressionist painting revealed the astonishing and mysterious wonder of the everyday world. By telling the story of the sole survivor of a massacre, Jose Arcadio Segundo, García Márquez shows the reader that people prefer to believe a fabricated version of history rather than face the truth of the gruesome event. He uses magical elements to illustrate emotions and experiences that are too extreme for words. When José Arcadio Buendía dies it rains yellow flowers. Gypsy artist Melquiades arrives in Macondo with two “magnetized ingots” with which he performs “magical” feats. “Macondo” is known to originate from mystical Eastern Central Africa, from the centuries-old language of the Bantus, is spoken by many of the slaves that were put to work in Colombia. “Likondo” and “Macondo” (plural) mean “banana” in many Bantu languages. Makondo can cure illnesses and is also the preferred food of the devil. To García Márquez, the name Macondo, with its deep and enigmatic sound, captures the mythical space he had devised from Aracataca and his youth: ‘Macondo is not a place but a state of mind allowing one to see what one wants to see and see it how one likes to see it. Macondo seems to embody the hall of mirrors of its founding vision: it doesn’t create anything of its own, and therefore it can’t influence the outside world or even sustain itself without the ideas of others. Though history is often depicted as constant forward progress, a political feud between Liberals and Conservatives with 200.000 persons dead (1946 – 1964). Márquez makes the point in this novel that many of the events of history repeat themselves or regress instead of constantly improving. This shows that progress is an illusion, and that all civilizations are destined to eventually fall (Jemc, 2018). He emphasizes that ‘no single line in my books which has not originated in a real fact’ (García Márquez, 1980). “I was born and grew up in the Caribbean. I know it country by country and island by island, and maybe this is the origin of my frustration that it has not ever occurred to me or has it been more amazing than reality itself. The problem is that the Caribbean reality resembles the wildest imagination.”. Circularity of Time Characters in the novel seem to be trapped in the circularity of time, leaving the reader gradually unsure about which generation or interval s/he is reading. This is particularly unsettling to readers from low-context cultures who experience time as a given, as empty space that needs to be filled. In rural, high-context, cultures like that in Macondo, people make time and are not made by time. Therefore, it is both natural and logical to live the time. Si Dios quiere or ojalá, let’s hope so. The living make speech and knowledge of being possible. But they live with the beings who have left the world of the living and with those who have yet to be born. Birth and death are experienced and recognized as rites of passage. Passages in the novel can awaken ancestral echoes in the subconscious of the reader. Úrsula plans a dance to inaugurate the newly renovated house, ordering a pia-

nola to provide the music. The family is awed by the music of the magical piano and José Arcadio Buendía tries to take a picture of the ghost playing. “the stubborn descendants of the twenty-one intrepid people who plowed through the mountains in search of the sea to the west avoided the reefs of the melodic mixup and the dancing went until dawn” (García Márquez, 2006). Slowly, the soul seems to be freed from the shared passion that brought these people together tonight. It is the Duende, the magical connection with the spirit of the ancestors, from the indigenous, the West Africans and the Spaniards. The movement, the sound, the scream, the tear, it all comes together in the Duende, in centuries of positive energy. Duende comes from the word Duen de Casa, owner of the house and refers to the spirit of the house. It is the spirit of the group and therefore the deepest core of culture. The Duende doesn't just let herself get caught, let alone change. She only shows herself when aroused. And when she's there, the soul of culture shows itself, in its full glory (Meertens, 2017). In the novel, there are hundreds of examples of this fresh, light, and precise style projecting a strong and unequivocal image in the mind of the reader, full of metaphors that light up the story. Not only are the characters haunted by their own decisions but also by those made by their ancestors. Events blur the distinction between past, present, and future, leaving the protagonists of the present in a state of fatalism, of resignation. Their fate, they believe, is predestined. García Márquez ties family names to temperament and ability, suggesting a person's destiny is sealed at birth with no way to escape it. Male family members named Aureliano are solitary and studious and usually gifted with some psychic ability. Those named José Arcadio are strong but marked with a tragic fate. García Márquez confuses the by then predisposed reader by having twin brothers Aureliano Segundo and Jose Arcadio Segundo follow the paths of opposite names. The women try to break this cycle of naming. The men, however, insist on paying tribute to their ancestors by continuing the name cycle, dooming the newborns to the same fate they suffered. The plague that descends on Macondo exacerbates the time disorientation, with its population suffering from insomnia and consequently a collective obliviousness, a permanent state of the eternal presence. Any attempt to escape the past is suppressed by a blinding nostalgia for childhood in Macondo. Blinding, as it takes away the sight for a failing city, which Macondo truly is. Only in the last pages of the novel, the reader discovers that in Macondo, there are two kinds of time: linear and cyclical. Both have always existed simultaneously, and, even as the Buendías move forward along the straight line of time, they are also returning to the beginning of time in an ever-shrinking spiral.

The circularity of time is a fact of life to many high-context readers and a source of chaos for the low-context reader. García Márquez had chosen not to include a family tree in the book, probably to set up the mental trap of circularity of time. English translator Gregory Rabassa (1970) felt compelled to compensate for this loss of control by including the tree: “something to help readers

keep all the characters straight". This was somewhat patronizing towards the English language readership, taking away the chance of getting confused and taking away the benefit of experiencing the emotional impact of puzzlement and loss of linear chronology. Social Proprietary Social propriety which ends in solitude and even death is the central theme of the novel. Personal happiness will flourish outside rigid social norms. Rather than being allowed to follow one's passions, the characters of Buendía family do what is expected of them, resulting in loneliness or unfulfilling relationships. These personal aspirations clash with societal expectations, in particular for women in small-minded high society. The happiness and freedom which are enjoyed in an interracial affair and old-aged, rekindled love are rejected because of racist beliefs and prejudices about elderly sex ("obscene"). Ambition, curiosity, and eccentricity, for instance, make José Arcadio, the patriarch of the family, an outcast suffering from community-imposed solitude. He is tied to a tree and starts speaking nonsense, which is later uncovered by a priest to be Latin. In spite of being invited back in José Arcadio prefers, having mentally escaped from the grip of expectations, the now comfort of his solitude. Another example is Meme's passionate affair with Mauricio. They have an illegitimate child which the grandmother insists should be kept a secret. The social shame leads to Mauricio's death and destroys Meme's life. The secrecy of that bloodline finally results in a child with the tail of a pig. Social expectations have an effect on personal space. The interaction between the Buendías is ongoing and intense. People perceive social and personal space in different ways. Hall postulate that the distance between individuals is related to the preference each culture has for sensory inputs used (Hall, 1976). For a high-context reader, limited personal space may be natural but for a low-context reader this might cause irritation, fatigue and a sense of rejection. Social norms tend to be more rigid in high-context cultures than in low-context cultures. High context readers will likely feel more compassion for the family members. They will be better able to feel the dilemma of staying loyal to the family or following personal aspiration at the, perhaps imaginary, risk of expulsion. Low context readers may feel suffocation and will be inclined to encourage the individual to 'just' follow his or her dream and leave, unaware of the prize the rebel probably pays: not only exclusion but also loss of belonging. Characters in the novel are in a constant balancing act between belonging and independence and this involves using politeness strategies to avoid loss of face. Face is an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes (Goffman 1955) . While it is not a necessity for one to strive to gain face, losing face is a serious matter which will, in varying degrees, affect one's ability to function effectively in society, in particular in collectivist cultures. "Facework" strategies are required during social interaction to maintain each other's face and avoid or mitigate affront, or face-threatening acts (FTA). The FTA can be verbal, paraverbal or non-verbal. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is the effort to redress these affronts. The relative nature of politeness is often related to differences of class, age-group, distance, power

and ranking (Trudgill, 1983). García Márquez applies numerous facework strategies in the book. Low-context reader's awareness of these politeness strategies will deepen understanding of the interpersonal relationships in the novel. There are no common criteria of politeness across cultures. Gumperz (1970) illustrates how speech functions like complimenting differ from society to society. In low-context cultures compliments and acceptance are brief and concise whereas in high-context cultures complimenting is often a prolonged activity involving several exchanges of praise and ritual denials. In cases of conflict, members from individualist cultures often prefer to use negative politeness strategies by showing deference, while members from collectivist cultures would rather use positive politeness strategies, highlighting friendliness (Morisaki and Gudykunst, 1994). Understanding face-threatening acts and ensuing politeness strategies is perhaps the most complex and sensitive aspect of intercultural communication. However well the author describes the circumstances, however precise the translator translates the work, there will always be a moment of the reader's preconceived notions, touching and sometimes misdirecting the reader's emotions. It is in the language and the translation that we find new linguistic layers of bias, potentially pushing the outside reader further away from the mind of the author. Language and translation - Spanish One Hundred Years of Solitude were originally written in the Spanish of García Márquez. He was keenly aware of the diversity within the Spanish Language, being quoted as saying that 'we will understand each other, even in Spanish'. There are important phonological, grammatical, and lexical variations in spoken Spanish of the various Spanish-speaking regions. When Latin America was colonialized, the Spanish brought their Peninsular Spanish (Castellano) along. Once there the imported Castellano revolutionized into a local Spanish. Castellano can be considered to be a semi-high-context language that avoids repetitions of the same word for the sake of elegance and therefore uses synonyms or pronouns at the direct expense of preciseness and clarity (Usunier, 1995). Latin American Spanish has been injected with indigenous and African influences and can be regarded as a higher context language. This distinction becomes evident in grammatical, phonetical, and lexical differences between Castellano and Latin American Spanish and across Latin American dialects. There is a wide variety of Spanish dialects, taking into account characteristic factors of the different areas such as their political and cultural ties, their geographical proximity, or their possible contact with any indigenous language. Ureña combines the Antilles, coast and plains of Venezuela and northern Colombia, with the indigenous language Lucayo (Ureña; Ghiano, 1977). Differences in the Spanish lexicon are abundant. A typical aspect of Latin American Spanish is the socio-cultural connotations of voseo. A Latin American variation of addressing people from the inner circle is the use of "ustedes" instead of "vosotros". In Spain, ustedes is used in a more formal and vosotros in a more informal context. In Colombia, however, ustedes is used very often, irrespective of the context. Usted is also used in the case of social distance and seniority. When close friends and couples

use the more intimate “tú” for each other, they may fall back to “usted” when in disagreement or in the directive. This wide range of words to address a group or an individual is typical of a high-context culture. Low context speakers have much less to work with. The English word “you” covers many variations of “usted and tú” as do the words “jij” and “u” in the Dutch language. High context users of the English language such as Nigerians and Indians, have found their own ways around addressing people with more deference than is possible with solely the word “you”. (Meertens, 2017).

Other examples of lexical differences are the Latin American words *concreto*, *liviano* or *canguil*, which are unknown or little known on the European continent (*hormigón*, *ligero*, *palomitas de maíz*). *One Hundred Years of Solitude* provides many examples of Americanisms, Spanish words and expressions with their origins in America, often from indigenous languages, and their use is usually unique to the continent. An outside Spanish-speaking reader unfamiliar with these words needs to make a translation, finds a more generic word used in both continents or finds a description of its meaning when using the original. *Chicharron* (Pork with generous portions of bacon, chopped into small pieces and fried in its own grease) in “*la preciosa herencia de Úrsula quedó reducida a un chicharron carbonizado que no pudo ser desprendido del fondo del caldero*” can be translated in *morros fritos*. *Parranda* (partying people, in particular at night, with drinks) in “*Aureliano Segundo no desperdició la ocasión de festejar a los primos con una estruendosa parranda de champaña y acordeón*” can be adapted in the more generic “*fiesta*”. Other words, exoticisms and indigenisms such as *hamaca* (seat) or *yuca* are those words that refer to realities unique to indigenous areas or Latin America and are unknown or little known in Spain as they do not have a lexical equivalent in Castellano. These cannot be translated and need a footnote or to be looked up at, putting the outside Spanish reader slightly at the distance of the original work. Perhaps most importantly, there are words that exist on both continents but take on a different meaning, sometimes contrasting or with varying connotations, even between regions on the continent. An example is a word “*regalar*” which in Spain means to give in the sense of gift. In Colombia, however, it is a friendly, educated, way of asking somebody to pass on something, also if it is clear that it needs to be paid for. “*Me regala un tinto?*” Can I have a coffee? With adding to the confusion as this word means red wine in Spain and coffee in Latin America. “*Coger*” means “take” in Spain as in “take the bus”. However, in Latin America, the word refers to sexual intercourse. There are also phonetic differences. In the Caribbean an “s” is generally pronounced muffled, it is a “deaf s”. When reading the dialogues between the *costeños*, the coastal folks in Spanish, the mental sound of the “deaf s” provides additional context and flavor to the conversation. García Márquez describes his characters in their own language. Melguíades for instance is characterized by poetic and scientific language (wearing) a velvet waistcoat

patinated with verdigris of the centuries' and Melguíades speaks in similar terms: "Things have their own life; it is a matter of awakening their spirit". Ursula, on the other hand, uses down-to-earth, colloquial language and is described in the same words. José Arcadio Buendía, the pater familias, is characterized by plain, occasionally vulgar, language, which he uses in speech as well. "Damn! Macondo is surrounded by water everywhere." In this way, García Márquez does not maintain an established narrative style, hopping from poetic, to imaginary, to colloquial, to humoristic, to solemn and back to poetic. In an interview in *Libre* in 1972 García Márquez says that spoken Spanish "walks down the street, while written Spanish is held prisoner for several centuries by the language police of the Academia de Lengua". To try to set the written language free is what writers in Spanish need to strive for, and what García Márquez has been doing, decolonizing the language. Employing a Creolized language, highlighting overlapping language usages and code-switching.

The meaning of old words is changed, and new words are brought into being. "Neither the colonial A Journey to Macondo 13 nor the colonized cultures and languages can be presented in a "pure" form, nor can they be separated from each other." (Bhabha, 1994). Language and translation – English and other languages for the outside native Spanish reader there are multiple linguistic barriers as we saw in the previous chapter. Outside, non-native Spanish readers, in particular those from low-context cultures, face linguistic and cultural hurdles. Readers in languages other than Spanish will have yet another barrier: the linguistic and cultural interpretation of the translator. These translators had to make a difficult choice between faithfulness to the original source text (ST) (a foreignizing strategy with the possible inclusion of footnotes) or adaptation to the target language (TL) (domesticating strategy with a possible weakening of credibility of the original narrative). This dilemma has been widely discussed by anthropologists and linguists, with few denying that language and its entire structures are dependent on the cultural and historical context in which they exist. Each of us creates one's own image of the world, unlike any other. These images are not compatible and not replaceable. Sociolinguistic scholars such as Malinowski (1964) have concluded that linguistic behavior could best be delineated and interpreted in its appropriate socio-cultural contexts. Language is a part, product, and vehicle of culture. Therefore, it is essential to take into account the relevant socio-cultural contexts of communication. Is there a role for the author to play in facilitating the translation and perhaps participate in the process of domestication? Translator Thomas di Giovanni and the Latin American writer Jorge Luis Borges is known to have collaborated "intimately" to make Borges's writing clearer and less ambiguous for North American readers. Di Giovanni saw one of his main tasks as explaining obscure regional references and providing historical details that Borges had omitted in writing for Argentines. This approach is criticized. When Latin American narratives are transposed to another polysystem, their instrumental nature loses its

immediacy, and the works are decontextualized (Larsen,1995). Aside from one instance, Bolaños (2010) could not confirm any exchange between García Márquez and his translators, not even with Gregory Rabassa (English, 1970).García Márquez craved the comfort of Spanish as he tells in an interview with *The Paris Review* (1981): “Excluding great masterpieces, I'd rather read a mediocre translation than try to read something in the original language. I never feel comfortable reading in another language, because I only feel truly involved with Spanish.” The exception is Eliane Zagury for her Portuguese translation. A number of footnotes in her translation (foreignization) correspond to terms the translator seems not to have understood at first and she has explicitly marked that she got in touch with García Márquez and he clarified the meaning to her: “Explicação do autor à tradutora” (“Author’s explanation to the translator”). Let’s look at a few examples of translation strategies for the novel. Take the last name of captain Roque Carnicero (butcher): “El jefe del pelotón, tenía un nombre que era mucho más que una casualidad: Roque Carnicero”. A foreignization strategy is used in French and English, keeping the original term in the translation, (e.g. “Carnicero” in French) but its meaning is explained in a footnote, or with an explanation added directly in the translated text (e.g. the theory of polysystems (Even-Zohar 1990) in which translated literature is seen as a sub-system of the receiving or target literary system. “Carnicero, which meant butcher” in English). It is also possible to use a domesticating strategy where the foreign item is directly translated into the target language (e.g. Roque Fleischer in German).

Another illustration is Father Coronel’s nickname: “fue reemplazado por el padre Coronel, a quien llamaban El Cachorro”. The nickname was left untranslated in the French text (foreignization): “qu’on appelé el cachorro,” The footnote reads: “Petit d’une bête fauve”. Rabassa translated the nickname into English: “was replaced by Father Coronel, whom they called “The Pup”, (domestication) Meyer-Clason left the nickname in Spanish but added a hyphenated explanation: “wurde durch Pater Coronel mit dem Beinamen El Cachorro – junger Hund- abgelöst” (foreignization). More challenging to translator and reader is an allusion to a work by Spanish writer Zorrilla: “El puñal del godó” without mentioning it explicitly. If the reader does not know the actual name of Zorrilla’s work, there is confusion in understanding the passage. In the German and French translations, a footnote clarifies the pejorative connotation of the word “godos”, which, in the main text, was kept in the original Spanish form to facilitate the direct link to Zorrilla’s work. In the English, domesticated, translation Rabassa keeps the diffuse allusion in English in the same way as it appears in the original: “He went to the theater, where a Spanish company was putting on *The Dagger of the Fox*, which was really Zorrilla’s play with the title changed by order of Captain Aquiles Ricardo, because the liberals called the conservatives Goths”. (Bolaños, 2010). Perhaps the most poignant example of domesticating is the translation by Rabassa of the word “puto”. During the

events of the Banana Massacre the narrator comments that it took place in “el puto mundo.” Puto in Spanish can be translated as “whorish” or as “fucking”. However, in the context of the massacre “this fucking world” would have adequately transferred the emotional impact García Márquez meant to provoke. Rabassa chose a less harsh “whorish” and that became his and his English readers’ interpretation of that sentence within the novel, changing the meaning and impact of the word “puto”. In a way, Rabassa became a part of the readers’ understanding of the novel because he chose that interpretation of the language. Earlier we discussed the impact of social propriety and face-threatening acts (FTA). García Márquez’s characters employ positive and negative politeness with direct and indirect strategies, with redressive action. For instance, if the speaker’s intention is unambiguous and direct, redressive action means that the speaker recognizes the imposition on the hearer’s face and minimizes it by using negative politeness sub-strategies to counter-balance the disruptive effect of the FTA, such as apology, reluctance to impose, deference to the hearer, self-abasement, etc. (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For this strategy, lexical downgraders and syntactic downgraders can be used. Lexical downgraders are politeness markers —such as the word please; downtoners —such as just, simply, perhaps, and rather; hedges —such as sort of and kind of; and hesitators —such as well and you see. Syntactic downgraders, have “the ability to distance the request from reality”. Trosborg (1995). lists several syntactic downgrading strategies, including question forms, tag questions, conditional clauses, embedded clauses, modals, -ing forms, the subjunctive, and past tense forms. Especially, the subjunctive and past tense forms are widely used as downgraders in Latin American Spanish (Meertens, 2017). The more the reader is able to relate to these strategies the closer s/he will be able to sense the emotional impact of the FTA on speaker and hearer.

A comparative analysis conducted by German Mira Álvarez (2014) shows how these acts in the source text (ST) are rendered in the English translation by Gregory Trabassa, the target text (TT). This FTA in the ST is direct without redress: Bueno —dijo—. Diles que vengan a ayudarme a sacar las cosas de los cajones. “All right,” he said. “Tell them to come help me take the things out of the boxes”. Nothing is done to minimize the threat to the hearer’s face. The speakers normally choose to do the FTA in this way, with the direct imperative as the most common bald-on-record syntactic form both in Spanish and English, due to low horizontal and power distance or risk of loss of face, as in the following request from husband to wife, which does not entail a great sacrifice for the hearer. Both high and low-context communicators will easily relate to this style given the context and speech strategy. Trabassa did not feel compelled to adapt the translation. There are a number of cases (11; Mira Álvarez, 2014) in which Trabassa did render a higher or lower degree of negative politeness. Coronel —dijo entonces otro de sus oficiales—, todavía tiene tiempo de quedar

bien. “Colonel,” another of his officers said, “there’s still time for everything to come out right.” With this strategy, speakers make their intentions ambiguous by using indirect speech acts so as not to be held accountable for the FTA, i.e., by being too vague, by saying too little, or by saying something not clearly relevant. This is a case where the TT is domesticated with additional downgraders by using there and everything. The ST says: “you still have time to come out right.” Uno de sus oficiales rompió entonces el silencio soporífero de la carpa. — Coronel —dijo—, háganos el favor de no ser el primero en firmar. One of his officers then broke the soporific silence of the tent. “Colonel,” he said, “please do us the favor of not being the first to sign.” In this example TT includes one more instance of redress —the lexical downgrader please, making the TT exchange “more polite” than the one in the ST: Anglosaxon readers are considered to be low-context communicators and therefore can be expected to be less inclined to redressive action than the characters of the novel. The weight of the word “favor” in both languages might play a role, reducing the need for “please, por favor” in Spanish. Favor in English is more task-oriented, in Colombian Spanish more relationship-oriented. Quería suplicarte el favor de mandarle estas cosas a mi mujer. “I wanted to ask you the favour of sending these things to my wife.” In the ST, the speaker uses suplicar in his request, which means to beg, ask for with humility, and submission. This humbling lexical strategy is not conveyed with the English verb ask for, thus making the request less polite than the original. And: A Journey to Macondo 16 Queda usted a disposición de los tribunales revolucionarios. “Put yourself at the disposition of the revolutionary court.” In the ST, the directive is done through a declarative (queda = put), while the translation turns the act into a direct command by means of the imperative (put = quede).

Translators are instrumental in transferring the socio-cultural context of the original work. Reading the story in another language than that originally spoken by the protagonists creates estrangement from the original work. Domestication of the translation disengages the reader even further, especially if the socio-cultural context of a scene requires a particular sensitivity to cultural differences, such as politeness strategies. Conclusion One Hundred Years of Solitude can be seen as the synthesis of the many influences under which Gabriel García Márquez developed as an author, foremost among them, the region he grew up in and returned to in different stages of his life. A region with a culture injected with indigenous, African, and colonial influences, with inhabitants of mixed descendants and with an intricate, highly contextualized, social life. Influences that came to García Márquez through the stories of his grandparents and the day-to-day life, the vaina, in Aracataca. The young man and aspiring author spelled out books of faraway worlds and was fascinated by the stories and narration techniques in particular. Later, as a journalist, he traveled and was exposed to life in Paris, Venezuela, Cuba and Mexico. It was his memory of how his grandmother

told her stories, however, that gave him his inspiration to share the story of Macondo and the family Buendía the way she did. In his own language, a creolized, decolonized, Spanish. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* can be read at different levels of comprehension. In its most accessible form, the novel tells the history and adventures of the Buendía family, from before the establishment of the Macondo up to its destruction. It captures its history, its culture, its spirit- the essence of a Latin-American village. The novel also portrays universal themes of contemporary life: the dimensions of time, estrangement, and solitude. García Márquez generally shows that honesty and desire should take precedence over social propriety. Following social norms leads to unfulfilling relationships, shame, loneliness, and life-destroying secrecy. García Márquez uses fantasy, episodic adventures, and omniscient narration rather than more straightforward techniques to cover these themes. In this article, we discussed potential cultural and linguistic barriers that set outside readers, not native to Northern Colombia, apart from the original work, in its purest form. They will likely need to overcome cultural and epistemological hurdles before being able to grasp the full essence of the story. Language and culture are inextricably interconnected. Language is meaningful in a context, and culture is part of the context. For a better understanding of culture, we can study literature and the opposite is also true: culture can be studied for a better understanding of literature. We discussed culture along the divides of high-context and low-context cultures. We saw that the novel has been conceived in a high-context culture. The use of magical realism and circularity of time, partially rooted in animism, adds to the cultural intricacy of the novel, making it highly contextual. The magical reality, by nature highly contextual, is not easily understood in a low-context culture as it is not part of its belief system. Magical realism may be entertaining, but it is hardly realistic. Outside readers from a high-context culture can expect to be able to relate to the magical, social reality of the Buendía family and of the people of Macondo. These *A Journey to Macondo* 17 readers will recognize and identify with, for instance, politeness strategies to avoid loss of face, to the warmth of social harmony, and to the pain of social propriety. Yet, historical aspects, linguistic differences, and cultural aspects may still keep this reader out of the context of the book. Studying and understanding decisive historical occurrences such as the Spanish colonization, La Violencia and the labor oppression at banana plantations as well as aspects of indigenous, mulatto, and mestizo cultures will help the reader reach new levels of comprehension. An important feature of speech, being friendly or hostile, is its cultural relativity. Languages and dialects of the same language differ in their interaction-structuring strategies. All aspects of the content and form or matter and manner of human communication are culture-specific.

To draw conclusions and make generalizations on the basis of observations of a particular language is a consequence of an ethnocentric bias that ignores the anthropological and linguistic

reality that norms differ from culture to culture, language to language, and even from dialect to dialect. We discussed the cultural and linguistic filters that exist for outside readers reading the original Spanish version of the novel. Spanish has local differences in grammar, phonetics, and lexicon. Each and every one of the Spanish dialects do not do more than enrich the Spanish language and therefore it should be questioned if it is necessary to translate or adapt those Latin American texts in order for an outside Spanish reader to be able to read the text without interruption to look up words or expressions and lose part of the information of the narrative. The work of García Márquez can in a way be regarded as an effort to decolonize the Spanish language and make Latin American Spanish more mainstream. Outside readers who read a translation of the novel have even more cultural and linguistic filters between the author and themselves.

We discussed various translation strategies, broadly ranging from foreignization to domestication. Foreignization might slow the reader down, keeping him or her out of the comfort zone but allowing more proximity to the original work. A domestication strategy may help TL readers to immediately ‘grasp’ the literal meaning of the original, but at the expense of possibly missing the intended impact of the original words. As we are always part of a historical context, it is not possible to ignore our prejudices (Gadamer, 2017). In understanding foreign literature (and any work of art, d’ Ansembourg, 2017), one should not blindly cling to one's own prejudices and remain receptive to what is different and strange. This requires an awareness of one’s own preconceived opinions and prejudices and a willingness to read the novel from a different perspective and possibly adjust one’s preconceived opinion. Thus, outside readers from low-context cultures may need to adjust their expectations when reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as they will be entering a different rhythm and literary space, a world of suggestive indirection rather than of dramatic action. The work is likely to remain of distant traditions in terms of theme, imagery, character, plot, or broader social and cultural concerns. A deeper, participative examination of the novel will reveal new levels of difference and of similarity, and further reading can deepen one’s understanding of these varied levels. New juxtapositions will open up over time as we read further and again. It is unlikely that an outside reader, impeded by linguistic and cultural filters, will ever truly be able to crawl under the skin of the author and grasp the full context of the original novel *A Journey to Macondo* in its purest form. The proximity to the highly contextualized story varies, with outside readers from low-context cultures, reading in translation likely to stay the most remote from the original. Awareness and management of cultural bias, translation strategies, and historical context may draw the reader closer into Macondo’s “vaina”. But the true soul of Macondo will likely stay in hiding, revealing herself only to the *Duen de Casa*.

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The vulnerable human being

A cultural anthropological study on life and work of Vincent van Gogh

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Abstract

This cultural anthropological study describes which characteristics have influenced life and works of the world most famous 19th century Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh in the countries where he lived, and vice versa his influence on the works of his foreign colleagues. An artist who only considered himself a true painter at the age of 27 and died at the age of 37, lonely and penniless.

Leading in this study will be the worldwide research of prof. Geert Hofstede into how national cultures differ in the basic values of life. Key in the article is the Dutch *feminine* culture, with sympathy for the unprivileged in society. This is explaining Van Gogh's choice of themes, especially depictions of working people, often from a profound emotional experience of the simple and intimate life of peasant laborers, weavers, and miners in the different countries where he lived and worked.

As a self-taught artist Vincent van Gogh was inspired for his artistic development by innovative ideas from colleagues. Especially in France where he learned new techniques and the use of vivid colours from his French colleagues, who had found each other in a new vision of reality: the individual experience of what the painter feels and experiences in his first impression: the *impressionists*.

Van Gogh had a complicated character and had a stressful life that often troubled him: unfinished studies, conflicting relations with family and friends, an unhappy love life and psychoses. After one of these psychoses, he admitted himself for a year in a psychiatric institution, to relax. During this stay he detached himself from existing ideas about painting and developed his own style: the emotional reaction of the artist to his environment became his motive. Based on that he created his most famous paintings. As such we can consider him as the founding father of *expressionism*, with still many followers all over the world in the decades after.

Key words: Vincent van Gogh, cultural differences, Hofstede, The Hague School, individualism, impressionism, expressionism

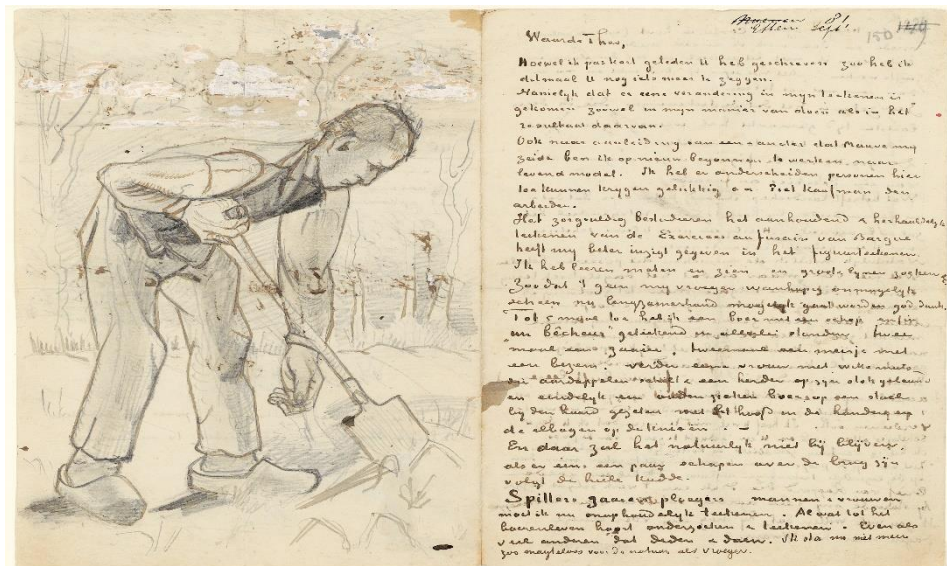
Introduction

There will be few nineteenth-century painters we know more about than that of Vincent van Gogh. During his life he lived and worked in more than twenty locations in The Netherlands, England, Belgium, and France. During the ten years he considered himself a fully-fledged artist, he produced about 850 paintings and approximately 1300 drawings, of which only a few were sold during his lifetime (Nix 2018). We also know what Vincent has looked like over the years. He painted dozens of self-portraits, more than 20 of them in the two-year period he lived in Paris. Not from vanity, often he could not afford models to paint. This however offered him the opportunity to experiment with perspective, colours and light.

We can also get to know Vincent Van Gogh through the many letters he wrote. According to art historians, there must have been more than a thousand, often multi-page, to his family, in particular to his benefactor brother Theo, who was four years younger. But also, to other family members and colleagues. Many of his letters, often with sketches of the work in progress with detailed colour descriptions, have been preserved, giving us a good insight into his soul stirrings, his passion, his creative mind, but also his doubts, his struggle with loneliness, his search for love, his psychoses and his self-destructive tendencies.

The linguistic content of his letters is exceptionally high. Historians believe that if he had not become a painter, he could have become a renowned writer. More than a third of his letters are in French. Not only because he spent a lot of time in France, which he regarded as his second homeland. But also, because in the world of the well-to-do bourgeoisie from which he emerged at that time it was "bon ton" to correspond with each other in French. He often signed his letters to

Theo with “*tout à toi, Vincent*” (ever yours, Vincent). Because the French could not pronounce "Van Gogh", he signed his paintings with "Vincent" (Hulsker, 1980). In my study I will also talk about "Vincent" in a narrative. This means that I like to share with you Vincent's intercultural experiences throughout his life as an artist.



Letter to Theo with the sketch of a digger, September 1881

Our journey through Vincent's life will not be from an art-historical perspective and therefore not be a complete one. In a cultural anthropological study, I will try to determine which characteristics of the country's cultures where he stayed have influenced his life, and how that translated into his works. And vice-versa, what was Vincent's influence on the work of his foreign colleagues. As a travel guide, I will introduce Prof. Geert Hofstede, who has conducted worldwide research into how people in more than 100 countries differ in dealing with the basic values of life. Although the countries where Vincent will reside have a completely different method of management, they all have the *individualistic dimension* in common: the interests of the individual come first (Hofstede 2010; see the country scores at the end of this article). In the nineteenth century this becomes clear when a cultural movement develops in Western society that will become known as Impressionism, with influences on painting, literature and sculpture (Wursten 2021). Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that, although the countries in which Vincent lived all share the dimension *individualism*, this dimension has a different interpretation in each of these cultures. In the Netherlands, for example, there is a strong link with femininity (working to have a good life in private), in Belgium and France it is the opposition to the dominant top-down mentality of the elite, and in England seizing opportunities for success and prestige. This will become clear further on in this article.

Dutch culture

In my study I take the Dutch culture in which Vincent grows up as the starting point for our observations, after which we follow him in England, Belgium and France.

- In Hofstede's research, Dutch culture has a low score on *Power Distance* (Hofstede 2010), that is, in general, a less dominant attitude of parents, teachers and bosses towards subordinates. Children are seen by parents as equals and are challenged to express their own opinions. Teachers and employers also accept this way of dealing with each other. How different is that in Belgium and France, for example, where contradiction by children, students or employees is not tolerated. How does Vincent experience this hard learning experience?

- The Dutch are regarded as *individualistic* (Hofstede 2010). Mind you, that is not the same as being selfish! Privacy is of paramount importance: the right to be let alone. The company of close family and a few friends usually suffices, in an atmosphere with the untranslatable term "gezellig" (is far more than cosy). Example: The Netherlands has the highest camper- and touring caravan density in the world, with which families anytime can go wherever they want (Kooyman 2020). Loyalty to a very extended family up to and including great-nephews and -nieces in exchange for their protection, as in a lot of *collectivist* societies, does not play any role in Dutch society.

- The Netherlands also has a *feminine* culture (Hofstede 2010): working for having a good life, good relations with boss and colleagues and sufficient free time to be able to do nice things are the essence of life. Working part time by both the partners is accepted.

Sympathy for the underprivileged in society is also part of this Dutch way of life. We will see that the latter will be the common thread in Vincent's life. How will Vincent experience this in a competitive and prestige - *masculine* - oriented society like the UK?

- Finally, the Dutch are less likely to panic when unexpected events occur, this means a low score on *uncertainty avoidance* (Hofstede 2010). They always look for a reliable solution. But it should also not be too casual. Social life must remain clear and structured. How does Vincent experience this in countries of residence such as Belgium and France, where uncertainty avoidance and the desire for control and - excessive - regulation play a major role in society? What does that mean for his emotional life and his work?

Dutch culture has some similarities with the Scandinavian cultures but **differs in all respects from all other cultures in the world**. The above-mentioned characteristics ("dimensions" according to Hofstede) cannot be viewed separately from each other. They should always be studied in conjunction. Wursten describes the Dutch cluster of dimensions as a "network society": "*equality for all is the defining value. All stakeholders are treated equally, are autonomous and*

participate in decision-making. Decisions are made based on consensus i.e. a shared-interest” (Wursten 2019, p.33).

The Young Vincent (1853 - 1869)

Nienke Denekamp and colleagues from the Van Gogh Museum describe Vincent's boyhood years in “*De Grote Van Gogh Atlas.*” A summary (Denekamp et al., 2015, p. 13-23): Vincent was born on March 30, 1853 in the village of Zundert, in the southern Dutch province of Brabant, where farm life on the poor arable land is difficult. He is the son of a protestant clergyman; his mother is a well-born housewife. Vincent is named after his grandfather and after his older brother who died at birth exactly a year earlier. Vincent is followed by five more children, including his brother Theo, who is four years younger, with whom he will maintain close contact throughout his life.

The Van Gogh family belongs to the upper-middle-class. At home they have a maid, two cooks, a gardener, and a governess. Every Sunday, the whole family walks through the village in their best clothes, humbly greeted by the rural residents. The clergyman is immensely popular amongst the poor farmers. Together with his wife, he often visits the sick and leaves money with the grocer for customers who cannot afford their groceries. This social character undoubtedly has influenced Vincent. In his wanderings through the area, he may already gain first impressions of the hard life of the agricultural residents, including many arable farmers and weavers. For many, it is hard to maintain a dignified existence.

Vincent is a quiet boy at school. At the age of 11, his parents take him out of school because they fear that he will be influenced too much by the behaviour of the farmers' sons in the area. From that moment on he is taught by his father and the governess. His mother teaches him to draw, crafts and sing, and instils a love for nature. At that time, it is not yet clear that he has talent or motivation for this.

For his further development, Vincent is sent to a boarding school in Zevenbergen, where he will stay for two years. After that, at the age of 13, he attends the Hogere Burger School (high school) in Tilbury. Because of the enormous traveling time (three hours walk and then another twenty minutes by train) he is living with a host family. After two years, Vincent suddenly leaves school for unclear reasons and comes back to live at home. (End of summary).

Vincent as a young adult (1869 - 1879)

At the age of sixteen, his parents decide that it is in Vincent's best interest to lead a working life, but at a socially acceptable level. He is hired as the youngest employee in the international art dealership Goupil & Cie in The Hague, which is co-owned by his uncle Vincent. His brother Theo

is placed at the Brussels office. The two agree to remain loyal to each other from that moment on (Denekamp et al.).

London

After four years, Vincent is transferred to the London office. At that time, England is the first country in Europe to have an industrial revolution. In a period without wars, with abundant raw materials (from the many colonies), fuels (coal mines) and labour, all preconditions are present to undergo an explosive economic development. An open competition with plenty of possibilities to explore leads to many new initiatives. Inventions such as the steam engine (rationalization of the production process) and the steam train (transport) boost prosperity. London grows into a global city and becomes the financial heart of a leading nation with a lasting influence on surrounding countries. Vincent is introduced to the *masculine* English culture in which pursuing and showing success is an important occupation (Hofstede 2010). On Sundays he can often be found on Rotten Row in Hyde Park, where his eyes are on the many luxurious carriages, in which the rich like to show their successful existence to the people (Bailey, 2019). During his walks he makes sketches of the environment that he sends to his parents. These sketches have unfortunately been lost.

During his stay in London, Vincent also often visits The British Museum and The National Gallery. He admires the famous painters of farmers life François Millet and Jules Breton. But he is also impressed by the 19th century British romantic painters John Constable who has a preference for working people on the land, and William Turner who is considered the greatest British landscape painter ever. In his most famous work, Turner sketches an unparalleled connection between the past and the present: during a flaming sunset, a steamboat brings an old warship to his last location to be scrapped. The extreme light conditions in this painting will inspire Vincent in his work later on.



William Turner: The Fighting Temeraire, 1839

Vincent is also confronted with the downside of the turbulent economy. The traditional English class society is rapidly transforming into a society with "haves and have nots". He sees poverty in the streets and is impressed by writers such as Charles Dickens (*A Christmas Carol*) who denounce social injustice, abject poverty, and the relationship between them. Deep in his heart he undoubtedly wonders whether his social motivation lies with the less fortunate. His decision to follow a calling as a lay priest may already be sown here. An unwanted reason to do so soon follows. He falls head over heels in love with his landlady's 19-year-old daughter, whom he proposes to marry. She rejects him on the grounds that she is already secretly engaged to someone else. He has no choice but to leave his landlady's house immediately. Because of this enormous love drama, he falls into a deep depression. He looks for comfort in the Bible. As a result, he increasingly does not show up for work and is fired.

His parents decide it might be better for him to leave England and get him a job at Goupil's headquarters in Paris. Here too he immerses himself completely in the Bible and writes whole pieces about it for his brother Theo. Eventually, he is also fired there due to disinterest in the work.

Belgium

Through his Bible study, Vincent sees a future for himself as a missionary for the poor and oppressed. He tries a theology course but can't see this through. To continue his missionary urge, he applies as a lay preacher in the Borinage, an extremely poor mining region in Belgium, near the French border. By then he is 25 years old. He descends seven hundred meters (!) deep into the dangerous mine and sees how miners, their children and old workhorses are at work under gruesome conditions. This affects him enormously and he cares diligently for the well-being of these least fortunate. He gives away his own belongings, cares for the sick and the poor, and gives Bible readings to bring comfort. In the meantime, he draws miners and their families in his spare time to show this poor existence to the world.



Miners in the snow to go at work, September 1880

Vincent is here confronted with the typical characteristics of Belgian culture. On the one hand, it is characterized by a steep *hierarchy* from bosses to subordinates with a super bureaucratic structure as the organizational principle. On the other hand, a very high score for *individualism* (Hofstede 2010). Deep in their hearts, the Belgians try to avoid the consequences of the hierarchy: *'drawing your own plan'* (Wursten, 2019, p. 50), often explained by historians as a protest against the many foreign occupations that have gripped the country for hundreds of years. This is no different in the Borinage. On the one hand, the miners and their families passively suffer the fate of unscrupulous exploitation by the mine owners, even after serious accidents. On the other hand, they each try to keep their existence bearable in some way. Vincent's involvement, however well-intentioned, is regarded by the authorities as harming their governance in the region (Tate, Seven things). After six months his contract will not be renewed. *"Mr. Van Gogh does not have the gift of the word"* is the motivation of the Committee (Denekamp et al.).

Yet Vincent cannot let their poor existence go. He will and must record this and draw attention to it. He stays in the region for a while and records almost day and night his hundreds of observations on paper, which he mainly donates to his landlady as a contribution to the costs of lodging. Not knowing that his landlady will light the stove with it the next day.



Women carrying sacks of coal in the snow, November 1882

Given the circumstances, the seed was sown here for his birth as an observant artist: outspoken recordings of emotional events from daily life, unconsciously at that time as one of the forerunners of what will later become known as Impressionism. However, he no longer has a source of income. How long does he want to live on the money of his family, his brother Theo asks him? This leads to a break between the two brothers of more than a year.

The breakthrough! Vincent feels like an artist (1880 - 1886)

After a year, the relationship between Vincent and Theo recovers. Vincent writes to him that he has decided to become a painter. In an emotional letter to Theo, he describes what he himself considers as his "liberation":

"A bird in a cage in the spring knows very well that there is something it could do for. He feels very well that there is something to do, but he cannot do it. What is it? He doesn't remember well. Then he has vague ideas and says, "The others make their nests and bring forth and raise young ones," and then he hits his head against the bars of the cage. But the cage remains and the bird is mad with pain. "Look what a idler," says another bird flying by. "That one there is a kind of rentier". Yet the prisoner remains alive, he does not die, nothing can be seen from the outside of what is going on inside him, he is doing well, he is rather cheerful in the rays of the sun. But then comes the time of the trek. Bouts of depression. "But," say the children who take care of him in the cage, "doesn't he have everything he needs?" But he sits out looking at the sky where a thunderstorm is threatening, and he feels the rebellion against his fate within. "I am in a cage, I am in a cage, so I am not missing anything, you fools! I have everything I need! Oh, freedom, please, let me be a bird like any other!" (Letter to Theo, in French language, July 1880. Hulsker 1980).

He is now 27 years old and realizes that he has no time to lose to be able to make a career as a self-taught artist. His favourite hero is Jean Francois Millet, a French painter who is famous throughout Europe for his scenes about the harsh life of peasants. Vincent asks Theo to send as many prints as possible so that he can practice with anatomy and perspective. To his delight, he progresses quickly: *"I have been making scribbles for quite a long time without making much progress, but lately, it seems to me, things are getting better, and I have high hopes that it will go even better"* (Denekamp et al., p. 68). To make saleable work, he must develop even further. Theo offers to regularly send him money until then, in exchange for selling works afterwards.

Vincent returns to live with his parents, who have since moved to Etten. He sets up a small studio next to the presbytery. During that period, he is also apprenticed to his cousin by marriage Anton Mauve in The Hague, at that time a highly respected Dutch painter in mostly sombre colours, in an art movement known as The Hague School.



Anton Mauve Women from Laren with Lamb 1885

Because of Anton's prominent position in the artist world, Vincent also gains access to other highly esteemed painters such as Willem Maris and Hendrik Willem Mesdag, whose techniques he studies closely. Anton gives Vincent instructions for making drawings and paintings. He encourages Vincent to experiment with oil paint as well and provides him with all the necessities. In a letter to Theo, Vincent writes: "*Because Theo, with that painting starts my actual career, you don't think it's good to just look at it like that?*" (Denekamp et al., p.77). However, Mauve ends the collaboration abruptly when he learns that Vincent is taking in a pregnant prostitute and her five-year-old daughter. She frequently poses for him. Although this brings him into contact with the physical and moral poverty of the poor and underprivileged in the city, this coexistence does not last longer than a year (Thomson 2007).

Vincent visits workers at home to be able to work from a model, often in work clothes. He is looking for a way to show his aptitude, as it were. To this end he intensely studies the peasant life and experiments, inspired by Rembrandt and Turner, with light and dark. For his studies he is welcome with a simple farming family in the immediate vicinity. In April 1885 he paints *The Potato Eaters*, his first large-scale figure work piece. He is very proud of that!



The Potato Eaters, April-May 1885

A few months later, the single daughter of the house turns out to be pregnant. Vincent has nothing to do with that, but the local catholic priest forbids his parishioners to pose for him any longer. Disillusioned, Vincent leaves this region and his homeland, never to return. He travels to Antwerp to study painting at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. He does not last long there and travels on to his brother Theo in Paris.

From dark to light: Paris (1886 - 1888)

France, with successively a Sun King, an Emperor, and a few post-revolutionary regimes, turned over the centuries into a centralist nation-state, which developed very rapidly in the 19th century. All power is concentrated in Paris. The departments into which the country is divided have little autonomy from the central government, comparable to a solar system in which numerous satellites are constantly orbiting the core (Wursten 2019).

In this 'zeitgeist,' Paris profiles itself as the undisputed world capital of art. The yearly *Salon* is the annual pinnacle of bourgeois cultural life, where the top paintings are exhibited and traded. Academic painting depicting intimate landscapes is regarded by the general public as clear proof of artistic quality.

During this period, however, a kind of "counter-movement" also develops, leading to an entirely new conception of art. A group of young artists including Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Edgar Degas tries to break free from the prevailing cultural elite and find each other in a new vision of reality: the individual experience of what the painter feels and experiences in his first impression. The group experiments extensively with light and colour effects, with a fine, dotted or striped design and with a light brush stroke that blurs the contours, as if it were a snapshot. Great boosts are the development of new, colourful pigments and the invention of the paint tube, which allows artists to paint outdoors, *en plein air*, which they also do en masse. "*Impressionism*" is born.

In the middle of this Impressionist movement, in 1886, Vincent arrives in Paris, now 33 years old. Together with Theo, he moves into a house in the Montmartre district, the art centre par excellence, with many entertainment venues, the natural environment of the bohemian. With the grey palette of The Hague School in his cultural baggage, he is confronted with the expression of his French colleagues. At first, he appreciates this only moderately: "*sloppily painted*", "*badly drawn*", "*poorly coloured*"(Denekamp et al.). But Vincent is also eager to learn. He tries to master the new painting techniques, with many stripes and dots. Because he cannot afford models, he makes a series of self-portraits in front of a mirror. He experiments with a variety of postures and uses brighter colours in his works. To give an example we observe his self-portrait after he just has arrived in Paris and just before he left Paris:



self-portrait, Paris 1886



self-portrait, Paris 1888

It is becoming increasingly clear that life in the modern, dynamic metropolis with an ever faster developing industrialization is not for Vincent. In addition, his health is failing him. He wants to get out of this busy, messy city, the unhealthy nightlife and the complicated artist's world. He is friends with the painters Paul Gauguin and Émile Bernard and proposes to them to set up an artist colony in the south of the country in which artists inspire each other and exchange works with each other.

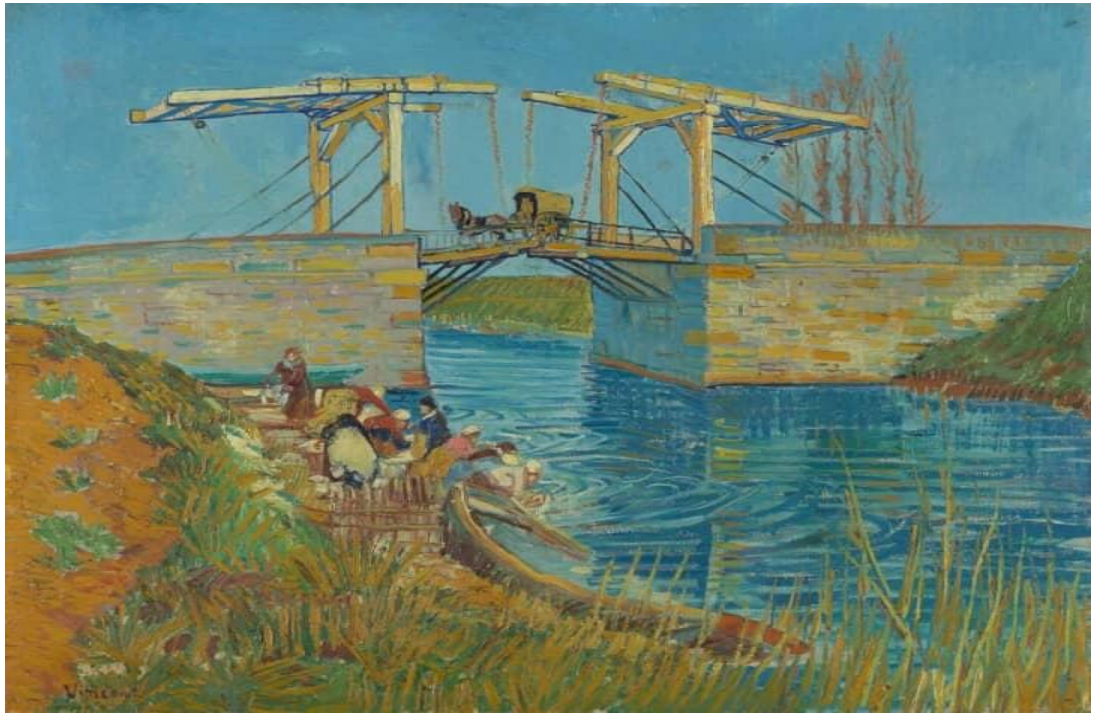
The highlight: Arles (1888-1889)

In general, the natural borders of a country also determine the ethnographic borders. However, there are also many subcultures within countries. This is also the case in France, where the sober, strict social culture in the north contrasts sharply with the more optimistic way of life in the south, described by Hofstede as '*indulgence*': *a tendency to allow relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun*' (Hofstede 2010, p. 281). In what the French themselves consider as "*joie de vivre*". *Indulgence* has a negative correlation with the dimension *Power Distance (hierarchy)*, which ties in very well with the low score for this dimension in Dutch culture: considering each other as equal (Hofstede 2010).

It is in this culture where Vincent ends up when he takes the train to the south and finally arrives in Arles, a village in Provence about a thousand kilometres from Paris. Vincent quickly feels at home here and makes many friends, with whom he drinks many glasses of absinthe on the terrace of the cafe on the Place du Forum.

Vincent's greedily absorption of the colourful farmland and the vibrant provincial life inspires him to an almost insane productivity. In the 15 months he stays here, he produces about 200 paintings and more than 100 drawings and paintings using watercolours (Hetebrügge 2009).

Vincent's way of painting is becoming increasingly impulsive and intuitive. The colours are becoming more and more exuberant, with the use of many variations in the complementary colours yellow and blue, the colours of the Provencal summer.



Bridge at Arles with washing women (Pont de Langlois), 1888

Vincent is also welcome with the postal worker Joseph Roulin (with an extreme beard) who allows him to paint many portraits of him and his family members.



Joseph Roulin, Arles 1889



son Camille Roulin, Arles 1888

This period can rightly be called the peak of his career. He still dreams of a "Studio of the South" where artists feel at home and inspire each other, where he can live with his friends Émile Bernard and Paul Gauguin and possibly with Theo. And indeed, Gauguin comes to Arles. Vincent

prepares for his guest with a fully furnished bedroom, but also with many paintings that Gauguin will certainly like, including vases with sunflowers.

Vincent is not doing well (1888 - 1890)

Gauguin's arrival in Arles will dramatically change Vincent's life. Initially they get along well and also paint a lot together in the same places. But their artistic interpretations increasingly degenerate into fierce discussions and even arguments. Their characters turn out to be incompatible. Finally, on December 23, 1888, one of the arguments ran high. Nobody knows exactly what happened between the two at that moment. The fact is that Gauguin flees the house never to return and that Vincent is left with a largely cut off ear. He is badly injured, ends up in hospital and has a serious nervous breakdown (Denekamp et al.). Two more nervous breakdowns follow discharge from the hospital. Vincent becomes a nuisance in the neighbourhood, and he is re-admitted to hospital by order of the mayor. He is delusional and even ends up in solitary confinement. His idealized world of an artist colony is over.

After consultation with Theo, Vincent has himself admitted to a psychiatric institution near to Arles, to relax. He stays in this institution for a year. He is given the opportunity to paint, and he paints the lilacs and irises in the garden, but also the distant mountains. From his room he paints the almond blossom just behind the wall of the garden. During his stay in the institution, he produces 150 paintings and as many drawings.

Vincent also increasingly detaches himself from existing ideas about painting and creates a free role for himself. He develops his own style, uses larger lines and his works become more abstract. Not the representation of reality but the emotional reaction of the artist to his environment becomes his motive. The Starry Night is the best example of this. It is an imaginary night scene with yellow stars above a small village with a church tower with on the left a flaming cypress and on the right alive trees against the hills. Creating this freedom of role Vincent in a way becomes one of the forerunners of "expressionism", which will have many more followers afterwards in the decades to become.



The Starry Night, Saint Rémy June 1889

Vincent “returns home” (1890)

Vincent has lost the figment of the imagination in the south. He longs to go back north. Theo proposes him to move to Auvers-sur-Oise, a small artists' village close to Paris. There lives a homeopathic doctor who is also an art lover who wants to guide Vincent in his recovery. In 1890 Vincent moves into a simple inn. He likes the environment very well. It reminds him of the countryside in Brabant, Arles and Saint-Rémy, where farmers from the area grew potatoes, corn and beans. In a letter to Theo dated 11 May 1890: *"It is extraordinarily beautiful, it is the real countryside, characteristic and picturesque"* (Hulsker 1980, p. 559). Vincent feels he has returned home again. He loves painting the area around Auvers.

Vincent notices that he is an ever-increasing financial burden for Theo, who is not doing well in terms of health and finance. His obsession with art has yielded nothing to him. He thinks he has failed in life. On July 27, 1890, he paints what will turn out to be his last work: the jagged shapes of the tree roots in a logging forest. He does not finish the painting and returns to the inn. Several hours later he enters the cornfields of Auvers for the last time and tries to end his life with a pistol. However, he hits his chest but misses his heart. Gravely injured, he stumbles into the inn. Theo rushes to Auvers but cannot prevent Vincent from dying in his arms on July 29, 1890, only 37 years old. Just six months later, Theo also dies, succumbed to the effects of syphilis. Both brothers are buried next to each other in the cemetery of Auvers-sur-Oise.



Tree roots, Auvers-sur-Oise, unfinished, July 27 1890

Postscript: what has Vincent brought us?

The relationship between culture and art

In the introduction to this article, I committed cultural anthropological research in which I would try to find out which cultural dimensions in countries where Vincent stayed have influenced his life, and what we see in his works.

As a starting point for our anthropological research, we looked at the Dutch network society, in which equality for everyone is the core value and in which all stakeholders can have a say in everything. We have emphatically experienced that this is not the case in both Belgium and France, where the dominant elite rules. These experiences deeply moved Vincent both emotionally and artistically. His experiences in the Borinage in particular have fuelled the realization in him that he could mean more to society as a creative missionary than an apostolic missionary. In France we saw that it took him a lot of effort at first to break away from the familiar, safe view of society as he had learned it in the best traditions of The Hague School, towards a more challenging, more impulsive view of everyday life. But afterwards also went for it!

I indicated that all countries where Vincent has lived have a western, individualistic culture in which the interests of the individual take precedence over the interests of the group. We have found that these characteristics, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, have also had a lasting influence on painting in England, Belgium, and France, in what I have termed the rise of 'Impressionism'.

Mental Health

In many biographies about Vincent, his difficult character and fragile state of mind are discussed: emotional, impulsive, and easily hurt, with an unbridled zest for work that was alternated

with delusions, nervous breakdowns and depression. Many psychologists and psychiatrists have considered the background of this. Is the fact that he is named after his brother who died on the exact same day the year before being the reason, he had to live up to what his brother could never achieve for himself? Is it the stress of constant money problems, hardly sold anything paintings and remained financially dependent on his younger brother? Or were there deeper problems that ultimately resulted in his suicide in 1890? In 2020, a group of psychiatrists attempted to analyse this based on his letters. This shows that it must have been a combination of negatively influencing factors: a bipolar disorder combined with a borderline personality disorder, a heavy alcohol addiction (absinthe at that time had 72% alcohol) and brain damage due to his physically and mentally exhausting lifestyle (Nolen et al.). Despite these disorders, he had a tremendous willpower and great perseverance. In several letters he wrote that painting had therapeutic significance for him. This belief has led him to be particularly productive in his active periods. What we can still enjoy today.

The vulnerable human beings as an object of study

It is important to notice that Vincent, as an exponent of the Dutch feminine culture in which care for the least fortunate is of paramount importance to everyone, has steadfastly adhered to his intention to report on this from the very first moment. In all his studies, the hard life of agricultural workers was his great source of inspiration. His life in the Borinage only fuelled that. Also, in his later works he never denied the recording of the life of the humble man, which we can see in his many sketches and paintings on this theme. He has never been tempted to paint technological highlights or industrial objects.

Inspirator for many artists after him

Vincent has also been a major influencer of innovations in painting, for which he only received recognition after his death. Once he has chosen a life as a painter, he shows an enormous eagerness to learn to master as many painting techniques as possible, with pencil, chalk, water colour and oil paint as well as composition, and he experiments with this particularly in numerous self-portraits. After his Parisian period, as a post-impressionist, he increasingly detached himself from existing ideas about painting and created a free role for himself: the artist's emotional reaction to his environment becomes his ultimate motivation. His fellow artist Pissarro predicted that Vincent would "... *be either go mad or leave the impressionists far behind*' (Bailey, 2021).

Vincent is one of the forerunners of expressionism at the beginning of the twentieth century. In it, the perspective is largely abandoned, with high-profile painters such as Edvard Munch ("The Scream"), Egon Schiele and Paula Modersohn. Also, 20th and 21th century artists are still inspired by Vincent.

Vincent has also had a profound influence on many of his colleagues in terms of colour use. His exuberant use of bright colours, particularly in his Provençal period, has inspired, among others, many British artists like Harold Gilman who applied Van Gogh's use of bold colours and expressive brushwork to English motifs, the French Fauvists, a group of painters using unmixed primary colours (Matisse is the main representative of this group) and the German expressionists. Painters all over the world have followed this in many decades after.

*After all Vincent posthumously has achieved what his intention was for life:
being meaningful to society*

What are we left with here? An extensive oeuvre that is still highly appreciated all over the world. For the less fortunate among us who cannot afford a Van Gogh at home, there is still plenty to admire. I recommend you visit:

- Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (NET), with 200 paintings and 500 drawings
- Kröller-Müller museum in Otterlo (NET), with 90 paintings and 180 drawings
- almost every renowned museum in the world with at least one of Vincent's works

Country scores on a scale 1-100 based on the research of prof. Geert Hofstede

| | NET | UK | BEL | FRA | |
|---------------------------|-----|----|-----|-----|----------------------------|
| Power Distance Low | 38 | 35 | 65 | 68 | Power Distance High |
| Collectivism (IDV-) | 80 | 89 | 75 | 71 | Individualism (IDV+) |
| Femininity (MAS -) | 14 | 66 | 54 | 43 | Masculinity (MAS +) |
| Uncertainty Avoidance low | 53 | 35 | 94 | 86 | Uncertainty Avoidance high |
| Short Term Orientation | 67 | 51 | 82 | 63 | Long Term Orientation |
| Restraint (IVR -) | 68 | 69 | 57 | 48 | Indulgence (IVR +) |

About the author

Carel Jacobs is a Dutch social scientist. He is a certified trainer in intercultural communication based on the worldwide research of Professor Geert Hofstede on cultural differences. Specialization of Carel Jacobs is the health care sector: lectures and training activities for doctors, case managers dementia and nurses about how to be effective in communication with patients and their families from non-western cultures. This article is written on personal interest.

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CULTURE AND THE ART MARKET

By: Eric Alexander de Groot: Email: Eric.Alexander.DeGroot@gmail.com

Synopsis: in this article, we are exploring the impact culture has had on art and vice versa, the importance of art and the art market, and the impact that technology is having on the current art market. Emerging technology has greatly influenced processes of distribution and expression as Digital Art is not only a reality but here to stay. The same can be said about value, valuation, financial currencies (fiat & cryptocurrencies), and how alternative transactions over the past ten years have emerged, infiltrated, and taken shape. Words like cryptocurrency and blockchain are the foundation of this digital art explosion. The reason “why” is well beyond the bottom line and profit, as (the importance of) provenance, reputation, authenticity, sales, brand, copyright are all part and parcel of this phenomenon. Nothing is the same. Embrace this new normal, breathe deep, and explore this brave new world.

Key Words: Culture, Art ,Art Market , Digital Art , Emerging Technology.

Culture is THE most important word in the dictionary as it is not only created by humans; it defines us. In everything we do and create; We ARE culture. From the moment we wake up, truly 24/7; we inhale culture, exhale culture, create culture, teach culture, pass on culture. Our lives are totally immersed and defined by culture. Culture is shaped by the expression of humans. Express-

sions are instinctive, emotional, irrational, groundbreaking, misunderstood, motivational, inspirational, life-altering. Art defined culture, as by way of sound, movement, and visual expression, initially on rocks, in caves, and out in the wild, where natural resources became papyrus and paper, and ultimately, a variety of canvasses were created to capture that expression which became known as art. The fact is that our lives are touched by art in a significant way, (it seems almost subconsciously) when confronted by the shapes, designs, and colors, as they penetrate our moods, minds, and hearts. You could make the case, that without these visual and performing expressions of art, we would or could not have survived Covid-19. This pandemic has caused a reset worldwide – not only impacting our economies but also evaluating the way we have been living, behaving, doing, and creating, and simultaneously thrusting the Art Market to the forefront, especially since technology has taken center stage.

We will be exploring Culture and The Art Market and how both are evolving in the 21st century and beyond, impacting and shaping (all) our lives, and the values we hold dear. Before we explore Culture and The Art Market in the 21st Century, we need to understand what we are dealing with here as well as what we are trying to express in relation to both the words Culture and The Art Market. Nothing endures but change, this applies to all our lives because of culture; the ongoing actions, disputes, discussions, disruptions, thoughts, and productions that propel us (relentlessly) into the future. What we do, think, and produce collectively is defined as culture. This culture, approached from a global perspective, is different everywhere, as, throughout the ages, earth's environments, harsh and pleasant, geographic location, available natural resources, human curiosity, conclusions and (public or private) leadership have all over the world – “locally” shaped a society. Through it all, Art was present, going back tens of thousands of years, or likely much longer, art impacted culture and culture impacted art. On Continents, this is exacerbated exponentially, as humans have to deal with different realities, resources, and reserves.

Long before our modern market economy, people would trade in the form of bartering, they would literally exchange (trade) two products or exchange a service for a product (or service). The history of bartering dates all the way back to 6000 BC. Introduced by Mesopotamia tribes, bartering was adopted by Phoenicians. In the Middle Ages, Europeans traveled around the globe to barter crafts and furs in exchange for silks and perfumes. Colonial Americans exchanged musket balls, deer skins, and wheat. (Anderson, 2020 for Intuit Mint Life). Inventions such as the wheel or the Gutenberg press made a huge stamp on the human experience and this had a significant effect on trading, as time and distance and mass productions created a bigger market with more inventory, available well outside of ‘your’ local community.

Before we delve deeper into Culture and Art Market, we must explain and describe what has happened in the Art Market when it comes to emerging technologies. The words we will examine

include Fungible, Fungible Goods, Non-Fungible Goods, Non-Fungible Tokens (NFT's), Money, Cryptocurrency, Blockchain and Digital Art.

1. Fungible
2. Fungible Goods
3. Non-Fungible Goods
4. Non-Fungible Tokens (NFT's)
5. Money
6. Cryptocurrency
7. Blockchain
8. Digital Art.

Before we delve deeper into Culture and Art Market as such, we must explain and describe what has happened in the Art Market when it comes to emerging technologies. The words we will examine include Fungible, Fungible Goods, Non-Fungible Goods, Non-Fungible Tokens (NFT's), Money, Cryptocurrency, Blockchain, and Digital Art. For those of you who are familiar with the above, please skip past all these definitions listed below, which are important to understand the meaning, intricacies, and impact on our new world of (digitally) creating, trading, and exchanging. In case you have never heard of them or simply want a refresher course, read "The Merriam-Webster" definition of fungible: It reads as follows: "Fungible": being something (such as money or a commodity) of such a nature that one part or quantity may be replaced by another equal part or quantity in paying a debt or settling an account. (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary copyright © 2021). Fungibility is the ability of a good or asset to be interchanged with other individual goods or assets of the same type. Fungible assets simplify the exchange and trade processes, as fungibility implies equal value between the assets. Do you think bananas are fungible? (Investopedia 2021). Fungibles goods refer to securities, or other items, that are equivalent or consist of many identical parts such that, for practical purposes, they are interchangeable. Material items, securities, and other financial instruments may be considered fungible goods. If goods are sold by weight or number, then they are probably not fungible goods. (Investopedia 2021). Assets like diamonds, land, or baseball cards are not fungible because each unit has unique qualities that add or subtract value. For instance, because individual diamonds have different cuts, colors, sizes, and grades, they are not interchangeable, so they cannot be referred to as fungible goods. (Investopedia 2021). Money is an economic unit that functions as a generally recognized medium of exchange for transactional purposes in an economy. Money provides the service of reducing transaction cost, namely the double coincidence of wants. Money originates in the form of a commodity, having a physical property to be adopted by market participants as a medium of exchange. Money can be: market-determined, officially issued legal tender or fiat moneys, money substitutes and fiduciary media, and electronic

cryptocurrencies. (Investopedia 2021). Non-fungible tokens or NFTs are cryptographic assets on blockchain with unique identification codes and metadata that distinguish them from each other. Unlike cryptocurrencies, they cannot be traded or exchanged at equivalency. This differs from fungible tokens like cryptocurrencies, which are identical to each other and, therefore, can be used as a medium for commercial transactions. (Investopedia 2021). A cryptocurrency (or “crypto”) is a digital currency that can be used to buy goods and services but uses an online ledger with strong cryptography to secure online transactions. Much of the interest in these unregulated currencies is to trade for profit, with speculators at times driving prices skyward. The most popular cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, has had volatile price moves this year, reaching nearly \$65,000 in April before losing nearly half its value in May. FYI, there are thousands of cryptocurrencies, according to Investopedia, 4000! One reason for this is the fact that there are more than 4,000 cryptocurrencies in existence as of January 2021. While many of these cryptos have little to no following or trading volume, some enjoy immense popularity among dedicated communities of backers and investors. (Investopedia 2021). What is a Crypto Commodity then? It is a general term used to describe a tradable or fungible asset that may represent a commodity, utility, or a contract in the real- or virtual-world through exclusive tokens on a blockchain_network. Finally A quick dive into the evolutionary history of cryptocurrency platforms is helpful in understanding the concept of crypto-commodities. (Investopedia 2021). If you have been following banking, investing, or cryptocurrency over the last ten years, you may have heard the term “blockchain,” the record-keeping technology behind the Bitcoin network. Let’s now list the features, needed for a better understanding of our topic:

- a. Blockchain is a specific type of database.
- b. It differs from a typical database in the way it stores information; blockchains store data in blocks that are then chained together.
- c. As new data comes in it is entered into a fresh block. Once the block is filled with data it is chained onto the previous block, which makes the data chained together in chronological order.
- d. Different types of information can be stored on a blockchain but the most common use so far has been as a ledger for transactions.
- e. In Bitcoin’s case, blockchain is used in a decentralized way so that no single person or group has control—rather, all users collectively retain control.
- f. Decentralized blockchains are immutable, which means that the data entered is irreversible. For Bitcoin, this means that transactions are permanently recorded and viewable to anyone. (Investopedia 2021)

What is Digital Art? In its broadest extent sense, “digital art” refers to art that relies on computer-based digital encoding, or on the electronic storage and processing of information in different formats—text, numbers, images, sounds—in a common binary code. The ways in which art-making

can incorporate computer-based digital encoding is extremely diverse. A digital photograph may be the product of a manipulated sample of visual information captured with a digital camera from a “live” scene or captured with a scanner from a traditional celluloid photograph. (Thompson-Jones, Katherine & Moser, Shelby copyright 2019. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). “Without art, without beauty, our life would be poor, dull, and devoid of emotion; even the human soul would suffer some form of erosion.” Valentin Okorokov. The global Covid-19 pandemic has not only affected us all, but it has also changed our way of living forever. In the eighties popular phrases included, “can you fax that to me” (when the Fax machine was introduced. The first one we purchased was \$8,000!) and now forty years later, virtual meetings are the norm, and we all (meet on) “Zoom” together. (Virtually Free) Initially, the idea of WFH (Work From Home) was enthusiastically embraced, however many of us are having “buyer’s remorse” – we can’t wait to meet at the Water Cooler in the office again and interact with colleagues or clients heart to heart and soul to soul. The clear downside of technology is that it eliminates a certain amount of “connection”, to really “feel” or get to know someone in person versus forging a 2-D relationship on a screen. (I choose In Person!)

The title of this article is “Culture and The Art Market” and the impact that one has had AND continues to have on the other. Similar to the question; “which came first, the chicken or the egg?” - is the culture impacting art more or art impacting culture more. I do not believe there is a definitive answer, even if there are statistics available to prove one over the other. Moreover, we all have our personal life journeys, unique experiences, filters, and opinions and it may be hard to convince one over the other. In addition, perception these days appears to be reality. Fact though is that Art saved us all since March of 2020 when Covid-19 broke out. Think about it: books, videos, Netflix, social media, sculptures, poetry, paintings, dance, concerts, all these visual and performing arts “kept us sane”. In that regard you could make the case that artists and their art have a bigger impact on society and shape our culture (more) than the other way around. However, because of technology, the internet, and the world wide web we are not only interconnected, but we are also globally wired and hooked up, looking at our personal digital assistants 24/7/365. Yes, the PDA, our mobile and cell-phones devices keep us ‘up to date. Whereas the artist has a specific message or expression that we see and consume, it could be that the crowd interprets, sees, or understand this piece of art differently and (somewhat) changes the intended creativity. (You see this more with visual art than with performing art, as one is ingested through the eye, the other the ear.) Meanwhile, popular hosts, media stars and or influencers can have a significant impact on the original art, depending on how they see, understand, or digest it, and when sharing it with their “26 million” followers on one of the social media platforms, the comment, upload or distribution could have a cultural impact – where this interpretation overshadows the original art. Do not underestimate The Crowd, the fol-

lowers, the masses, they create not only media sensations, viral videos but also, trends, and collectively The Crowd wins. Depending on the “brand” of the artist, the crowd (and their culture) may “hands down” beat the artist and their art. This leads me to address Digital Art and the fact that there are now actually two Art Markets. The art market is the marketplace of buyers and sellers trading in commodities, services, and works of art. Moreover, the market is not transparent; private sales data is not systematically available, and private sales represent about half of the market transactions. Transactions used to be exclusively by galleries large and small, though online sales are a reality: In 2019, online art sales amounted to approximately 4.82 billion U.S. dollars, up by four percent over the previous year. Worldwide, the estimated value of the online art market is forecast to reach a total of 9.32 billion U.S. dollars by 2024. (© Statista GmbH Hamburg, Germany 2021). Next, Digital Art and Non-Fungible Tokens (NFT’s) are taking center stage. Moreover, they are going mainstream and even the famous auction houses are getting involved. Did you know that “Everyday — The First 5000 Days,” by the artist known as Beeple, set a record for digital artwork in a sale at Christie’s. The piece of art sold during an online auction for \$69.3 Million! (Reyburn, 2021, NYT Published March 11, 2021 Updated March 25, 2021, Source: JPG File Sells for \$69 Million, as “NFT Mania” Gathers Pace). The buyer did not come with Yen, Euros, or US Dollars, they paid with cryptocurrency (so who knows what that is worth in today’s terms), still this sale ‘shook the world’, immediately being valued higher than a van Gogh, Monet, or Delacroix. The point being, what used to be the “elite of elites”; the absolute top painters, pure name droppers, or when considering value and valuation it was immediately overshadowed (in sales price) by Digital Art. Obviously, money is not worth as much as it used to be, still, Digital Art and NFT’s are fetching prices that are out of this universe! This New Media is something you should not dismiss, and NFT’s should likely also be considered as an asset class in your (investment) portfolio. I highly suggest you read up on it, just like streaming platforms will not go away, neither will Digital Art or NFT’s. In conclusion, I truly believe we can all agree on a few things, culture and art both shape our world, personally, privately, emotionally, psychologically, financially, and in so many more ways. It is not really whether culture impacts art or art impacts culture, it is the fact that both exist, and we are all the better for it. Truly our souls yearn for expression; expressions by artists individually as well as expressions by the crowd, collectively, we need these shapes, colors, designs, materials, notes, moves, and thoughts to get through life. Imagine your apartment, house, or condo without art, walking into office buildings without art, or entering an office without art, it is stale and sends an immediate message to our brain, what kind of an organization you are dealing with. You want colors, you want to design, you want something that is welcoming, in more than one way. The importance of art cannot be described or celebrated enough, especially its healing powers. Art these days is also prescribed by physicians, instead of pills it is now ‘tickets to go to the museum. Data

shows that all “patients” greatly improved after the visits. Yes, due to the pandemic the art market shrank by 22% in 2020, down from \$64.4 billion in sales in 2019 to \$50.1 billion last year, though emerging technologies, including the digital art market, will not only find an audience worldwide, online sales will continue to increase exponentially. There are many ways to express what the fundamental purpose is, and I enjoyed this one a lot: “A fundamental purpose common to most art forms is the underlying intention to appeal to, and connect with, human emotion. However, the term is incredibly broad and is broken up into numerous sub-categories that lead to utilitarian, decorative, therapeutic, communicative, and intellectual ends. In its broadest form, art may be considered an exploration of the human condition, or a product of the human experience.” Art can function therapeutically as well, an idea that is explored in art therapy. While definitions and practices vary, art therapy is generally understood as a form of therapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication. It is a relatively young discipline, first introduced around the mid-20th century. Historically, the fine arts were meant to appeal to the human intellect, though currently there are no true boundaries. Typically, fine art movements have reacted to each other both intellectually and aesthetically throughout the ages. “With the introduction of conceptual art and postmodern theory, practically anything can be termed art. In general terms, the fine arts represent an exploration of the human condition and the attempt to experience a deeper understanding of life.” (Lumen Learning © 2017 Lumen Learning. Lumen Learning, Candela). I am convinced that Culture, Art, and The Art Market will always be in our lives and continue to play a very important role everywhere we roam, whether at home, at work, in local communities, cities, countries, and continents, and across the world. Do your part to promote art by sharing posts, visiting exhibitions, supporting artists, and making sure that you buy a piece of art, and enhance your space, your wall, your life – with that raw, authentic, and creative expression. Just like we are all part of nature, so are art and culture - a part of us.

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ABOUT US



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Charitable Foundation (International) and PCO Non - Governmental Organization (Switzerland, Geneva, United Nations Global Compact member) partnered for the Project. Since 2020 it has also been a part of SICD International Research and Education Consortium (United Kingdom of Great Britain).

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