Introduction

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The writing in Art in Transfer in the Era of Pop focuses on cultural transfers in the extended 1960s. This decade, stretching back to the 1950s and forward into the 1970s, covers the “Era of Pop,” a period of new, intense, artistic engagement that is often characterised by the breakthrough of American art and popular culture in Europe. The title of this volume was likewise inspired by the film Stockholm à l’heure du Pop (Swedish title: Popen kommer till stan), produced and filmed in 1964 by a Belgian artist by the name of Olivier Herdies (1906–1993), who had lived in Sweden since 1937. The film, running for 33 minutes, starts out with long shots from the city life of Stockholm, picturing Stockholm’s tunnelbana (the Metro, also known as T-Bana) and the crowds of the 800,000 inhabitants of this city as modern and urban. Shots from exhibitions in numerous independent art galleries follow, combined with interiors from the very first presentation in a European museum of American Pop Art: the show Amerikansk pop-konst: 106 former av kärlek och förtvivlan (American Pop Art: 106 Forms of Love and Despair), at the Moderna Museet.

The film’s construction of affinities between art and urban life and culture, as well as between the local and the international, is what makes Stockholm à l’heure du Pop a suitable emblem for the thinking and writing that has been gathered together in this book. New art did not just arrive in Europe in the guise of American Pop in the early 1960s; it was already
happening in numerous ways. In addition, the film represents these processes in the capital of Sweden, a “neutral” country between the West and the East. While some of the essays in this volume are consequently about events, art, and cultural transfers that took place in Scandinavia, others examine curatorial and artistic practices from a wide range of other geopolitical situations in Brazil, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, and Poland. Thus, in a certain respect, the authors have a privileged position compared to that of historians placed in the centre, in the sense that they are sensible to the fact that their statements are written from specific locations. Their case studies thus unpack a web of conflicts, critiques, resistances, mutable agencies and contradictory patterns that were present in the practices concerned.

Critical attention has been increasingly directed to questions of how power structures were reshuffled in the long 1960s, as new production forms, positions and liaisons emerged in the markets and fields of art. Over the last years, a critical field has developed within art history which concerns methods for challenging the established narrative of modern art, a narrative that has been structured on ideas of centre and periphery, the nation, and aesthetic development. Since Serge Guilbaut’s pivotal How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War (1983), some of these assumptions have been questioned and new spatio-temporal models have been proposed.1 While Guilbault’s book put forward an intricate sociopolitical argument for why American art gained power in the Western art world—an argument which changed how these events are perceived today—it did not provide models for understanding the nature of local situations, the cultural transfer of art and the complex relations between agents involved.2 This anthology has

1 Serge Guilbaut, How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983. Recent art exhibitions have served to widen the scope of the art ordinarily connected to Pop, see International Pop, produced by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and The Ey Exhibition, The World Goes Pop, Tate Gallery, London, both in 2015.

2 The concept of cultural transfer, central to art history, was developed within a group of international researchers that published their work in Michel Espagne and Michael Werner (eds.), Transferts: Les relations interculturelles dans l’espace franco-allemand (XVIII et XIXème siècle), Paris: Editions recherche sur les civilisations, in 1988. Within the field of literary history, the term is used to study circulatory implications, turning away from comparative studies and instead highlighting cross-mixing between cultures. Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel developed theories of cultural transfer for the circulation of the works of the great modern artists in her Nul n’est
the ambition to work in that gap, offering case studies using different methods but with the common notion that they combine local knowledge, archival research, and micro stories to open up new transcultural perspectives on the Pop art of the 1960s. The project is firmly located in the field of horizontal art history.3 Piotr Piotrowski, in his book In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989 (2009), takes a stand against the tendency of many projects to reinforce a universal perspective by reproducing the opposition between the centre and the periphery. He even asserts that the interest in “peripheral” portions of the continent is inversely proportional to, as is his example, the absence of East-Central European art from the textbooks on European art history.4

There are still scholarly and methodological problems with how global art is framed by stylistic premises originating in North Atlantic Art History, in the general art historical discourse. Thus, the challenge for the art historian is twofold. First, important theoretical and empirical work is still urgently to be performed, in order to describe and analyse the process and its effect on the art life and art discourse of the 1960s and today. Secondly, research has to be done on various conceptual, artistic and curatorial processes in the Era of Pop, to tell new, other, and multiple stories. These are the challenges that the scholars contributing to this anthology, working on this field from different cultural positions, are responding to in various and deeply intriguing ways.

Among the methods employed in these studies, one finds the use of a multiplicity of sources in order to enhance the possibility of understanding several social, cultural, financial, and political contexts, and articulates the kind of work that needs to be done in order to reassess the period. Many of the essays take a dual perspective, pairing a thorough knowledge of the


particular and the local with a horizontal perspective on how art historical writing and concepts of cultural transfer can be further developed. This horizontal perspective varies between authors, but the dual approach in and of itself serves to open up mechanisms and strategies in the material. The contributions present a web that, to refer to Piotrowski once again, serve to resist the concept of universalism and change the established narratives of the period. As Piotrowski puts it in his introductory essay in the book, something that Agata Jakubowska also emphasises in hers: “peripheral art works are caught in a kind of trap between a general vocabulary of style, which originated elsewhere […], and local specificity that is not readable from the outside.”

Considerations such as these serve as a point of departure for reassessing the East–West cultural transfer with regards to the Neo-Avant-Garde, its exhibition forms and artworks. In the Era of Pop, artistic regeneration spread in networks both outside and inside institutions, between metropolises and peripheries. Most of the studies in this anthology have the exhibition and curatorial strategies in focus, not just as a practice of aesthetic decision-making, but as performative, active position-taking in the art world as such. While Part One of this volume focuses on how exhibitions articulate positions in an emerging field, sometimes gaining force and in other cases not, Part Two presents readings of artists’ practices as reactions, reflections, criticisms, or creations of imagery concepts connected to Pop. Here, alternative readings and understandings of these practices are put forward.

In her chapter, Mathilde Arnoux scrutinises an excellent example of Piotr Piotrowski’s “trap” from the period just before Pop art exploded, that is, from the congress of the International Art Critics’ Association in Poland in 1960. The congress was held at a particularly interesting moment in history, when major shifts in East–West relations were beginning to take effect. It exemplifies the end of the Abstraction/Figuration dichotomy that had dictated the artistic identities of the opposing blocs. Arnoux assesses the two models of representation, figuration and abstraction that

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were still so critically important in the 1950s. The theme of the conference was “Modern Art as an International Phenomenon,” and the hosting Polish branch of Association Internationale des Critiques d’Art (AICA) had intended to let it represent the Thaw after the death of Stalin. In the Polish context, representation, even if “abstract,” preserved its mimetic connection to a referential physical reality as in the case of artwork by Marian Bogusz and Tadeusz Dominik. The Western critics at the conference, however, did not allow their own perspectives of internationalism to be challenged by an alternative model of an art form that embodied different values than their own. Even the French critic Restany, despite being well versed in the Polish context, described it as an inferior situation and a belated copy to what had already happened in the West.

The arrival of new art from the U.S. has occasionally been described as a cultural invasion in the framework of popular culture, and, as stated above, a matter of rivalry between art in Paris and New York. The artist Robert Rauschenberg and his early appearances in Europe, for example, in 1961 on the occasion of the Rörelse i konsten (Movement in Art) exhibition at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, have been seen as embodying these processes. In her chapter, Catherine Dossin takes the occasion when Rauschenberg received the Grand Prize of Painting at the Venice Biennale in 1964 as her point of departure, and when the French critic Pierre Cabanne questioned whether the jury had given the award to the indisputable painter or to the pop artist. Through close readings of texts and archival documents and quantitative and distant readings, methods developed in Artl@s, a research project on spatial-digital art history at École Normale Supérieure in Paris, directed by Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel and Dossin herself, she points to the 1964 Biennale as a decisive moment in the history of Western Art, where young artists for the first time could be artistically consecrated.

Hiroko Ikegami takes on the position of an outsider in relation to the dominant culture while visiting a claimed periphery, arriving in Stockholm to follow Robert Rauschenberg’s artwork Monogram through the history of the Moderna Museet. The study takes the famed combine as well as other works of Rauschenberg through its more or less scandalous performances in the museum in the 1960s, to a harsher, more political criticism of the American part of the museum’s programme during the period of the anti-American climate around the beginning of 1970. It ends with
the appropriation by the Moderna Museet of Robert Rauschenberg’s signature for a new logotype in connection with the reopening of the museum in a new building on the old site in 2004. Ikegami also follows Rauschenberg’s visit to her native Japan, offering an overview of a number of Japanese artists whom she designates as Tokyo Pop and whom Rauschenberg, visiting Tokyo in 1964, failed to give any real recognition. Within the local art scene as well, through the connotations that the Japanese perceived in Pop art to earlier military aggressions, these artists failed to receive any appreciation.

*Amerikansk pop-konst: 106 former av kärlek och förtvivlan* (American Pop Art: 106 Forms of Love and Despair) was the very first showing in a European museum of pop art, opening on 29 February 1964 at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. In Sweden’s national narrative, this exhibition has been inscribed as a pioneering moment, opening a new space for an “Open Art” in Sweden, as well as constituting a triumphant moment for American art in Europe. My own contribution, a close study of archival documents and texts connected to the exhibition, scrutinises the conception, production and reception of the show. It intends to reveal how the period of conception of the “Pop show” in Stockholm not only coincides with, but also plays a direct role in the negotiation and development of Pop art as a phenomenon and label—in the U.S. After about two years of preparations, the show’s opening symbolised a consolidation of a previously open art concept and art market rather than the beginning of a period of openness and inclusion of art forms and artistic actors which has been the standard story. Due to the exhibition, pop art became identified in Sweden with the American artists it presented, while several early local shows and initiatives by young artists, such as the ones presented in the film *Stockholm à l’heure du pop* referred to above, presenting a diverse variety. The new space that had been consolidated was gendered male.

Reactions to the American Pop invasion were occurring all over the world. Hannah Abdullah’s contribution to this volume begins in November 1964 during *New Realists & Pop Art*, the first Pop Art exhibition in West Germany, at the Akademie der Künste in West Berlin. At the opening, the gallerist and curator René Block protested against the lack of German artists in the show while wearing a gas mask with a poster strapped to his back that advertised New German Realists at Gallery Block. On his front, he wore a poster for “Images of Capitalist Realism,” Gerhard
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Richter’s first solo-exhibition at Galerie Block. The action was received as “in keeping with the Pop Art style.” Block’s opening of a new gallery was calling for a broader perspective on Pop as well as a clear political content. Abdullah asks whether Block, through his activities and those within graphic arts, was seriously proposing a Western parallel or an alternative to Eastern Bloc Socialist realism. She concludes that by mobilising the new realist idiom to thematise pressing social and political issues in Cold War Germany, Block tried to push pop to its limits. Politics and pop coexisted in his programme of Capitalist Realism.

Öyvind Fahlström was something as unique as a Swedish artist who was strongly connected to the American Pop field through his close friendships with artists like Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, Rosenqvist, and Lichtenstein. He lived and worked in Manhattan from 1961 almost until his premature death in 1976. Sophie Cras’s contribution to this anthology sheds new light on the “cartographic” dimension of Fahlström’s work, in particular his World Map (1972). Cras argues that although Fahlström was often considered part of the international pop art scene, his use of comics and his appropriation of American counterculture were part of a strategy to propose a new visualisation of the Cold War. Fahlström mimicked and subverted the techniques of visualisation of economic data initiated by the German economist Otto Neurath in the 1920s. He thus built a very personal, politically engaged and fantasised cartography of the violent imperialist politics of the early 1970s, suggesting that given categories and divisions could be traversed, condemned, or ridiculed. In his case, the situation between local and global was not a trap, but a way to open new semiotic dimensions in painting.

Another “local” perception and deep transformation of American Pop and Robert Rauschenberg, was the one performed by Brazilian artists. Oscar Svanelid’s chapter manages to reformulate the Brazilian reception of U.S. pop art in the early period of the military dictatorship (1964–1968) in “AnthroPOPhagous” terms. He argues that Brazilian artists not only rejected pop art, but then simultaneously incorporated it into their work, thus revealing complex aesthetic and strategic processes. This idea is scrutinised in two case studies of the art of Waldemar Cordeiro and Hélio Oiticica. Far from regarding pop art as nothing more than commercial images, as is often assumed, Oscar Svanelid suggests that these Brazilian
artists used pop as a political instrument—as did Fahlström—but in a completely different and unique manner.

The trap between the specificity of the local and the general style vocabulary developed elsewhere, was a position in which many artists in Europe found themselves. Another “trap” was constituted by the strongly male inflected space of pop art and the art scene as a whole in the 1960s, which failed to foster female agency. However, pop art practices were also adopted outside this space, to the oblivion of dominating art history. In her chapter, Agata Jakubowska departs from a recent international feminist exhibition which claimed to break the dominancy of Anglo–American pop while presenting female pop artists, but failed to take into account Eastern Europe, as it was not fully addressed in their local or national context. Jakubowska’s study is rigorous, comprising an analysis of two highly interesting exponents of art production in the actual Era of Pop, outside the established explanatory conventions.

Katarina Wadstein MacLeod, in her turn, uses the non-spatial and trans-national figure of “the home” to approach art that was made locally, in Stockholm, during the peak era of American art import. The domestic, truly highlighted in American pop art, was not only scrutinised and questioned by the Swedish Women’s Movement, but also reoccurred as a problem and tradition within the work of artists such as Marie-Louise Ekman and Anna Sjödahl, who adopted pop-related elements in their art. In the course of the remapping of Western art history, studies like Jakubowska’s and MacLeod’s are essential.

A tendency towards abstraction could be found in other European contexts, as in the post-war modernism that saw the advent of artist groups that opted for spatiality through the synthesis of the arts that would engage with citizens and form a ground for democracy. Many of the most celebrated artists from the period were engaged in these questions, and yet little of their collaboration is visible in art history due to the tendency to emphasise “American” art history. Håkan Nilsson’s chapter looks into two of these groups, Groupe Espace in France and aspect in Sweden. He argues that the groups were important for transferring art ideals and disseminating ideas that would reach outside the art community and into the urbanist strategies for the reconstruction of Europe, a trait that was non-existent in their American counterparts. Nilsson discusses how the idea of a joint visual language functioned with the ideal of pluralism and he reflects on
the groups’ relationship to the “open” art scene of the 1960s, as well as to the much-debated suburbs from the same time.

Tania Ørum’s chapter establishes how the 1964 American Pop Art show and other exhibitions at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, were disseminated to Denmark and the Netherlands, where they had a considerable impact. “Most pop art came to Denmark through Sweden,” Ørum explains and points out that artist networks developed over the border between the two nations. Despite this, she suggests, different conceptions of pop art and minimalism developed in the two countries. In the introduction of a Swedish edition of texts by John Cage, written by Torsten Ekbom and Leif Nylén, she finds a very open and inclusive use of the term pop art, which she contrasts with how in Denmark, minimalism was used as a term for what was new and American, at least to the extent that it was understood in the writings of Hans-Jorgen Nielsen, who was influenced by artists like Smithson, Judd and Morris.

In his chapter, Dávid Fehér’s deals with both exhibitions and image structures. He investigates transformations of pop art in Hungary through key exhibitions of the late 1960s. In the focus of the study is the so-called “Iparterv circle” that was named after two legendary semi-official group exhibitions held in Budapest, as well as solo exhibitions with the “Ipartev-artists” György Kemény, Endre Tót and László Lakner. He explores the extent to which the exhibitions can be interpreted as peculiar local responses to international artistic trends, viewing them as instances of cultural transfer. He also analyses, at the level of aesthetic strategies seen within the artworks, how these artists transformed the “Western” notion of Pop art and how they were related to local artistic traditions. Hungarian pop-related exhibition projects of the 1960s and similar exhibitions in the Eastern bloc are essential for understanding pop art’s reception in the region. The analysis of such events might shed light on hidden perspectives of “international pop” and his chapter, as many chapters in this volume, will contribute to comparative studies on the internationalisation of pop art.

As has already been obvious for the reader, the work of Professor Piotr Piotrowski has played an invaluable role in this anthology, not only because of the impact and importance of his own authorship to our field of art historical research, but also for the central part he played as keynote speaker and discussant, as colleague and friend, during a conference at
Södertörn University and Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2014. We were all looking forward to future readings, meetings, and interchanges with him, and were immensely saddened and shocked by the news of his passing in May 2015.

The anthology *Art in Transfer in the Era of Pop* is dedicated to his memory.

Stockholm, November 2016
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6 The scholars contributing to this volume gathered during 6–8 November 2014 at the *Art in Transfer: Curatorial Practices and Transnational Strategies in the Era of Pop* conference held at Södertörn University and Moderna Museet, Stockholm, arranged by the Department of Art History, School of Education and Culture at Södertörn University, in cooperation with the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES). My deepest gratitude to Charlotte Bydler, Senior Lecturer and former research leader in Cultural theory, CBEES, and Oscar Svanelid, PhD Candidate, for their invaluable contributions to, and joyful exchanges during, the conceptualisation and realisation of the conference. I would also like to thank Anna Tellgren and Annika Gunnarsson, Moderna Museet, Helena Mattson, KTH School of Architecture and Francesca Rose, Terra Foundation for American Art.