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Research Project
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This research project is enabled through a fellowship at the NFS Iconic Turn / Eikones Center at the University of Basel (starting October 1, 2013) and deals with the relationship between national political self-representation, refusal of national images, and their reconstruction in the context of the predicted decay of national agendas by globalization.

Starting with three national galleries of modern and contemporary art in contrasting but complementary geographic and temporal contexts, I discuss the importance of contemporary art within the framework of art geographies which extend far beyond individual buildings and their display: from the urban shadow of these institutions to public art, political grass-roots movements and site specific artistic projects, and the media meta-image formed by official and unofficial organizations, reception, and day to day use.

The National Gallery, Washington (1941/78) , the National Museum of Contemporary Art Bucharest (2004) , and the National Gallery Singapore (opening 2015) stand for three moments and sites of globalization: world player during the Cold War, post-communist identity construction at the intersection of Eastern Europe and the world, and postcolonial South-East-Asian center of international trade. The formal convergence of the three art spaces lies in the harnessing of classical, politically problematic monumental architecture through the containing use of neo-modernist glass. Its alleged formal transparency and neutrality, now long part of the repertoire of globalized corporate architecture, is used for the framing, delineation, and preservation of historic structure, both literal and symbolic: for genealogies of various modernisms. At the same time, these national-aesthetic hybrid structures are showcases of contemporary art: minimalism and its discontents in DC, an event-oriented "relational" curatorial model colliding with post-communist avant-gardes in Bucharest, and a "multiethnic" Utopia aimed both at a local and at a global audience in Singapore.

The book is not a history of the national galleries , but a theoretical treatise which takes as starting point concrete spaces and institutional framework to understand the official and alternative forms of representation in a global context. How do art history and curatorial practice, display and politics work together, and what kind of canonization develops in these geographically specific contexts? To what extent does the question of global art history play a role in this endeavor of (often conflicting) constructions of representation? The collaboration of art, architecture, and the state, and the possibilities for changing it are at the heart of this enquiry.