

INTRODUCTION

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN A WORLD OF MOVEMENT



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‘It was ridiculous what they taught us!’ exclaimed the Ghanaian artist Amon Kotei (1915–2011) in 1989, talking about his time at Achimota Art College in the 1940s. During that period, the Gold Coast was part of the British Empire and Kotei’s European teachers had expected him, in addition to learning the basics of ‘Western’ techniques such as drawing in perspective, to work in a style that was ‘traditionally African’. The artist’s expression of indignation concluded with his account of how, one day, while making a figurative clay portrait of a female model, his teacher, Vladimir Meyerowitz, had suddenly shouted at him for idling away his time by ‘copying European art’ (Svašek 1997: 32).

Born in 1900 in St Petersburg as the son of Russian and German parents, Meyerowitz had been trained as a woodcarver at the *Kunstgewerbeschule* in Berlin. Interested in ‘traditional African design’, he had moved to South Africa, teaching art and crafts at the University of Capetown. Invited by the deputy director of education of the Gold Coast colony, he took up the job of arts and crafts master at Achimota College. The director had been worried about the quality of arts and crafts produced by school pupils, and Meyerowitz agreed that they were in danger of losing the skills of their ancestors. His advice to Kotei was that in his three-dimensional work, he should rather stick to ‘African’ traditions (Woets 2011: 98–99). It was ironic, said Kotei, that his teacher had condemned his interest in European sculpture while applauding the efforts of European artists like Picasso who

took inspiration from African masks. In Kotei's view, it seemed unfair that European appropriations of African visual elements were celebrated as valuable artistic innovations, and African appropriations of European elements were disparaged as acts of mindless copying. The irony, however, was lost on Meyerowitz.

Kotei's insight captures the main theme of this book: the dynamics of cultural production and creativity in an era of intensifying globalization and transnational connectivity. The approach of the volume is informed by an argument made by Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (2007) against a limited understanding of creativity as pure innovation, an understanding that derives from a limited, typically modernist view that seeks to assess the 'originality' of end products, ranking them on a scale from (inferior, mechanistic) imitations to (superior, creative) innovations. This perspective of creativity as innovation (marked as Creativity, with a capital C, by Birgit Meyer in the afterword to this book) erroneously offers a 'backwards reading of creativity [that] lies outside time' and fails to acknowledge the ongoing improvisational dynamics of product manufacture and use, as well as of human life in more general terms (Ingold and Hallam 2007: 10). This volume argues that practices of copying and reproduction should not be placed in opposition to creativity, but conceptualized as part and parcel of the creative process. As Arjun Appadurai (1986) and Fred Myers (2001) have pointed out, circulating within and across different regimes of value, images actively coproduce concrete contexts. Whether replicated or not, there is always uniqueness in artefacts and pictures; produced or used in new situations, they are necessarily drawn into specific temporal or spatio-temporal situations. It is this process of active people-thing dynamics that is at the centre of this book. Its contributors pay particular attention to processes of authentication and authorization that shape creative practices. As Kotei's case highlights, cultural producers do not create in a social vacuum, and are confronted with expectations that stipulate what kind of products are appropriate, correct or pleasing and which are not. Direct or indirect demands and desires are communicated, and in some cases strongly enforced in wider fields of practice, including institutional settings (such as schools, museums, religious organizations), markets (for example, of art, fashion or religious artefacts), and political regimes (in national, colonial and postcolonial settings) (Fuglerud and Wainwright 2015: 5; MacClancy 1997). As the example of Kotei illustrates, while such demands do not necessarily dictate what is actually produced, they need to be taken into consideration if we wish to understand the creative process in its full depth. The perspective of improvisation helps us to bring the process of *creating* into focus, and allows us to explore the force of specific expectations within different fields of creative practice. As Rob Pope (2005: 38) pointed out: 'An emphasis upon

the *created* rather than the *creating* aspects of production ... underwrites an aesthetics and a politics of fixed (not fluid) form and absolute (not relative) value.'

The creativity-as-improvisation perspective featured in this book emphasizes the fluidity of material and visual production, demonstrating that values are actively produced through artefact-focused discourses, practices and embodied experiences.

The Temporal Dimension: A Sidestep to Jazz

In 2001, John Liep edited a volume on creative practice that conceptually separated 'improvisation' from 'cultural creativity'. He identified the former as 'a more conventional exploration of possibilities within a certain framework of rules', opposing it to creativity that involved 'the acceptance of the novel in a social environment' (2011: 2).¹ By contrast, and for reasons that will be outlined below, this book uncouples notions of creativity and the unconventional, agreeing with Ingold and Hallam (2007: 3) that processes of improvisation are 'not conditional upon judgments of the novelty or otherwise of the forms [they yield]'. From this perspective, both copying and innovation are central aspects of creative processes.

To assess the suitability of the creativity-as-improvisation perspective for the analysis of material production, it is enlightening to consider recent debates in the field of music that similarly question the repetition-innovation dichotomy. Scholars such as Ryan McCormack (2012) have criticized the idea that improvisation in Jazz should be considered the unrestricted free creation of unanticipated sonic flows, signifying endless newness.² Representations of Jazz as an entirely impulsive, unrestrained form of music-making have disregarded the impact of embodied learning on subsequent musical practice, ignoring a longer-term temporal perspective (Faulkner and Becker 2009; Stanbridge 2004a; 2004b). Sara Ramshaw (2013: 6) has pointed out that 'the distinction between a planned or described act and improvisation is always already unsettled'. This impossibility of absolute singularity on the one hand, and of isolated newness on the other, means that neither those who aim to make exact reproductions of existing forms (whether sonic or material), nor those who strive to invent entirely new ones, can escape the intertwining of past, present and future (Derrida 2001). As Kirsten Hastrup (2007: 200) has similarly argued: 'Creativity is not cut loose from the world (in which case it would register as madness), nor is it simply a competent response to anticipated outcomes (putting it on a par with agency). For "creativity" to retain a separate meaning, it must comprise both the unexpected and the recognizable, both newness and anticipation.'

This statement raises many crucial questions explored in this book. How are experiences of the recognizable and the unexpected produced, orchestrated and judged in different social settings? How do cultural producers, both individuals and institutions including museums, governmental organizations and religious authorities, create, value and control the tensions between desired anticipation and unwelcome surprise? And how does the appropriation of specific visual and material forms inform processes of identification in an interconnected, highly diverse world? As in the case of Kotei, conflicts over the ownership of certain images or styles can be indicative of complex histories of oppression and resistance, and central to claims to national identity and independence.

To further assess the analytical possibilities of the perspective of improvisation to explore such issues, let us focus on the ways in which two British Jazz musicians have approached questions of newness and repetition. As music is, by definition, a temporal, performative phenomenon, the comparison will help us to think further about material production as a transformational force in people's experiences of subjectivity and identity claims. In the summer of 2011, I was present at a workshop that formed part of the International Summer School for Pianists at Chetham's Music School in Manchester. During this workshop, Jazz musicians Steve Berry and Les Chisnall enacted and commented on the workings of musical improvisation. Les started off asking the participating musicians to raise their hands if they had any previous experience in improvisation. When only a third of the audience responded, he commented that, in fact, everybody should have done so. He stated:

People improvise all the time. Take me as an example. Here I am, talking to you, but I don't know exactly what I am going to say to you next. I don't have a pre-written script in front of me, I know vaguely what I want to talk about, but the words really come to my mind as I am speaking. This is normal; we do not, when we wake up, have a completely planned schedule for the day, and we need to adjust our plans all the time as we respond to situations.

Chisnall's point resonates with Ingold and Hallam's (2007: 9) argument that 'far from being a strategic planner, aloof from the material world upon which its designs are inscribed, the mind is in practice a hotbed of tactical and relational improvisation'. For the following five minutes, Les and Steve talked about the rigidity of much music tuition, in which students expect to follow a set curriculum, mostly playing technical exercises and preset scores. To demonstrate the possibilities of what they saw as a more humanistic approach to music, Les sat down behind the piano and Steve took hold of his contra-bass. What followed was a minimalist performance where the two players alternated playing single notes. It was fascinating to follow their

musical dialogue, to see the anticipation on their faces, and to experience with them how expected and unexpected musical sequences generated and resolved sonic and emotional tensions. What stood out was the playfulness of the process; the sense that they were teasing each other, withholding and giving in, creating and blocking flows.

Especially remarkable was the intense emotional involvement of the audience members (including myself), who listened in excited expectancy, and laughed when surprising musical responses were given. They also responded to the musicians' body language and facial expressions; the nods, smiles and frowns that marked their interaction. Next, Les asked the audience to actively imagine which note would come next, and raise hands whenever an *expected* note was played. An interesting dance of hands followed; at times almost everybody put their hands up, less often only a few hands were raised. Reflecting on the result, he explained that during improvisation sessions it was crucial to not just play random notes; this would result in uninteresting chaos that nobody would be able to make sense of.³

Rather, he suggested, in responding to notes, the improvising musician should listen very carefully to unfolding sound sequences, imagining different possible developments. Conscious or less conscious choices should then be made between 'more' and 'less' predictable alternatives. His earlier point about the rigidity of much musical tuition was not that classically trained students did not improvise at all, which was, in his view, logically impossible (cf. Barber 2007: 32; Cook 1990: 113), but, rather, that their musical imagination was not sufficiently stimulated, and that they were not made aware of potential alternative approaches to set scores.

The central argument of this book is that the tension between experiences of (un)predictability and (restricted) choice, a tension central to creative practice, can only become analytically visible when attention is given to the temporal dimension, by taking a processual approach. Improvisation must, therefore, not just be understood as working within the boundaries of existing 'cultural repertoires' (Tilley 1995): it entails practices of repetition as well as practices of 'repertoire-building' that emerge in dynamic processes of performance (Faulkner and Becker 2009: 194). Returning to the session with Les and Steve, the musical alternatives (which note to play, which sequence to repeat or break up) could not be fully predicted at the very start of the musical dialogue, but arose in the process of musicking. The options were generated in the interactive process between the musicians as they produced and responded to each other and developed melodic lines, and as they responded musically to the reactions of the public. In this dynamic emotional process, they not only challenged each other, but also surprised themselves and the audience members, as they constituted themselves as players in an affective field. The surprise element lay as much in unexpected

repetition as in the creation of new configurations. Past and present were intertwined, since new musical routes could only be explored because earlier renderings were actively remembered.

Importantly, Les reminded workshop participants that, since he had often improvised with Steve, some sequences that sounded less predictable to most audience members were routine to them, a phenomenon Robert Faulkner and Howard Becker (2009:187) call ‘network-specific repertoires’. These repertoires expanded through rehearsal and repetition. Through their creative practice, certain notions of creative subjectivity were also reinforced. As established artists, Les and Steve worked in wider professional infrastructures in which discourses of improvisation, that regarded the aim to surprise as a signifier of individuality, were promoted and shared (Becker 1983). Thus, their particular view of creative practice produced its own expectations. While this approach competed with more dominant classical music tuition traditions taught at the school, their classes were equally part of an accepted curriculum, and linked to an existing subsection of the music industry.

So why is the discussion of musical improvisation relevant to this book? Like musical fragments that are reproduced and expanded in succeeding performances, visual fragments and stylistic features are also recycled, re-configured and recombined – in new times, places and infrastructures, the last of which may include the religious, the artistic or the museological. As such, copies are truly reproductions; they are actively made in new times and spatial settings, gaining situationally specific functions, meanings and appeal. In the words of Patricia Spyer and Mary Margaret Steedly (2013: 31), this means we have to investigate ‘[to] what extent mages [can] “leap” across media to travel beyond their originally imagined audience and, in conjunction with other factors, produce unanticipated publics and counter-publics elsewhere? In what ways does media technology itself transform the “message” of the image?’

Like musicians who work with and against expectations within musical fields, visual image producers and users also create expanding and changing visual and material repertoires, producing material and pictorial forms in expected and unexpected ways (Mall 2007; Nakamura 2007). The question whether specific instances of imitation are positively or negatively valued, then, is not a query into the supposed levels of creativity of those engaged in replication. Instead, it critically explores the underlying discourses that set specific expectations regarding the design and use of material products in and across particular sociohistorical and geographical settings. The creativity-as-improvisation framework, in other words, investigates not just occurrences of people-thing interactions, but acknowledges that ‘what is accepted or not, and accorded value or not, is decided in social settings where market forces and power are at play’ (Fuglerud, chapter 6, this volume).

Interconnected Localities and Overlapping Fields of Practice

The contributors to this volume explore the ‘who, what, where and why’ of material production in different localities that are globally connected to other localities in distinct ways. Several questions are crucial. First, how are the production of objects and images and the institutional management and evaluation of such cultural production shaped by divergent, implicit and explicit understandings of creativity? Second, how does transnational interaction trigger both expected and surprising forms of creative production? And third, how do the processes of authentication and authorization that dominate particular infrastructures of production and consumption influence creative interactions and experiences? The chapters present case studies from a broad selection of locations in Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and the Americas, challenging conceptions of creativity that regard ‘art’ as the ultimate domain of innovative creation, opposing it to conventional, repetitive ‘craft’, and separating it from ‘religion’. While the book shows that such views, established in Europe as part of specific modernist ideologies in the late nineteenth century, have been reproduced in certain settings outside Europe, it argues that the dichotomies they reproduce are highly problematic. Crucially, the chapters in this volume examine the circulation and appropriation of cultural forms within and across a diversity of emergent and interconnected markets of art and fashion, religious spaces and museums of art and ethnology, and show that creative activities that at first appear local in dimension are more often than not part of translocal, ‘transcultural’ chains of production (Brosius and Wenzheimer 2010).⁴ In some cases these processes involve actors embedded in numerous institutional fields, for example as professional artists, ritual actors and protectors of heritage. The complexity of the translocal movement of people, things and images reinforces the need for a global approach that critically explores, rather than reifies, exclusivist notions of art and aesthetics (Svašek 1997: 4 Belting and Buddensieg 2009; Harris 2011; Kaur and Mukherji 2014: 1; Marcus and Myers 1995; Spyer and Steedly 2013).

Three related notions that underpin – more or less explicitly – the analyses in this book are transit, transition and transformation (cf. Svašek 2010, 2012b). Highlighting the mobility of people, things, images and ideas underlying cultural production, they provide a useful perspective on artefact-focused improvisational dynamics in a world of movement. ‘Transit’ refers generally to the movement of people, objects and images across space and time, a process that is influenced by changing technologies of transportation and communication. New media technologies, for example, that mediate images in new ways, have strongly increased people’s access to visual cultures produced in faraway locations, creating new possibilities of appropri-

ation in locations across the globe (Brosius and Butcher 1999; Ramaswamy 2003). Relatively cheap flights, affordable to some, though not all, travellers, have also expanded exposure to distant human and material environments, stimulating the production of artefactual commodities that can be moved to, and recontextualized in, various new locations. The second notion of 'transition' describes how artefacts and images that are taken to and reproduced in new spatial and/or temporal contexts, gain new significance, value and appeal. As pointed out earlier, this is not an automatic, unmediated process:

Global flows are neither frictionless nor ubiquitous; they depend on particular media platforms and their infrastructures, which regulate and restrict the direction and transmission of information; they face interruptive forces, including institutional forms of censorship or the requirements of capitalization or the routine degradation of technological capacities; they generate static as much as signal; they create novel aesthetic experiences and replicate or revamp existing ones. (Spyer and Steedly 2013: 23)

Examples of transition through movement to new geographic locations are artefacts bought at pilgrimage sites and taken home to become an object of personal devotion (Huyler 1999); and design elements printed from websites and used locally or integrated into existing designs (Buchloh 2006). Transition also describes how artefacts that remain in the same location can become meaningful and effective in new ways. Examples are the changing significance of a political monument under a new regime (Svašek 1995) or the rearrangement of a permanent museum collection, reflecting new curatorial intentions (Stocking 1985).

The third term, 'transformation', refers to the dynamic ways in which cultural producers experience and perform subjectivity as they create and relate to material environments. This perspective rests on an understanding of human subjectivity as a relational process of social performance and experience that is partially influenced by internalized cultural norms and social habitus (Bourdieu 1977). In this conceptualization, subject-object relationships are mutually constitutive (see Miller 1987: 33) and subjectivity emerges as a dynamic of repetition and change (Hastrup 2010: 195).⁵ Situationally specific transformations can be transient, for example when a person dresses up for a birthday party and the costume marks the ritual occasion, or when a Catholic enters a church to pray for a sick friend in front of a statue of Mary. Transformation, in these cases, is directly related to transition (Svašek 2012b: 5). Taken out of the wardrobe, changing the outer appearance of its owner, the party dress helps to increase the celebratory mood, or at least this is the intention. During prayer, the statue gains personal meaning and emotional efficacy as the worshipper senses closeness to God. Transition-transformation can also describe more lasting social

changes, for example when a queen is crowned or a Muslim convert starts wearing a headscarf, their attires marking their new status and identity.

While these examples describe instances of transformation/transition that are relatively conventional and unsurprising, engagement with artefacts and visual forms can also be less predictable. Arnd Schneider (2003, 2006) has used the term ‘appropriation’ to explore transitioning cultural forms in unfamiliar places and social settings. As Schneider argues, appropriation entails an active process of interpretation, and thus changes the outlook of the appropriating agents. As this book will show, such transformations do not only happen through hermeneutic practice, but also through active emotional and sensorial engagement with objects and images. Evidently, the different political conditions of appropriation need to be taken into account: there is a vast difference, for example, between the incorporation of ‘homeland’ religious icons in new diasporic settings (Plasquy 2012: 86) and looting in contexts of war (Davis 1997: 153).

A Case of Creative Transition and Transformation

The following case study of a temporary exhibition in Worthing, UK, illustrates in more detail how a focus on transit, transition and transformation can help to elucidate creative processes across times, spaces and social fields. In the spring of 2015, Worthing Museum and Art Gallery, situated in East Sussex, opened the exhibition ‘East Meets West’. The show had been conceptualized by Kalamandalam Barbara Vijayakumar, a British textile artist who, after her degree at Winchester School of Art, had also undergone training in traditional performance art in India. Two exhibition spaces on the first floor displayed costumes, photographs and other objects related to five quite different themes: Kathakali theatre, Bharathanatyam theatre, Morris dancing, Romani Gypsy art and culture and the culture of the Downland shepherds. Linked to the overall theme of ‘East Meets West’, the artefacts were recontextualized and presented in a familiar ethnographic format, placed in groups and accompanied by labels and explanatory texts. An intended balance between surprise and recognition characterized the creative curatorial process.

As a person with a particular life trajectory, Barbara herself embodied the notion of ‘East meets West’. As she explained in the exhibition catalogue, her title Kalamandalam signified that she had completed her training in traditional makeup techniques at the Kerala Kalamandalam, a famous school that taught Kathakali, a form of traditional Hindu theatre that itself had ‘evolved from a variety of sacred temple and folk arts of Kerala’ (Vijayakumar 2015: 5; cf. Nair and Paniker 1993; Zarrilli 2000). Together with

her husband, Kalamandalam Vijayakumar (VJ), who had been trained as an actor at the same institute, Barbara had established the Kala Chethena Kathakali Company in Southampton, appropriating the tradition in new ways. The Company organized both traditional performances adapted to UK audiences, and offered a variety of workshops to schools and community groups, tweaking the format in response to different aims and circumstances (Svašek 2012b: 25). Between 2007 and 2015, I participated in numerous workshops at different venues, witnessing the ways in which the traditional theatre techniques were used for different purposes. In 2007, for example, anthropology students at Queen's University Belfast explored questions around the performativity of emotions during a week of workshops, lectures and a final performance by VJ. They learnt to recognize, and tried to copy, some of the dramatic facial expressions conveying basic emotions that are central to the Kathakali acting style. By contrast, in 2011 Kathakali was framed as 'religious theatre' at a secondary school in England, where students learnt about Kathakali as part of their religious education. The emphasis was now on the transformation of actors into divine beings, Hindu mythology, and the sacredness of Kathakali performance.⁶ At the 'East meets West' exhibition, the focus was on the Kathakali costume tradition. A text in the catalogue (Svašek 2012b: 3) referred to a photograph of VJ as a female character and a photograph of a 150-year-old wooden headdress, asserting that: 'from the pictures ... we can tell that *the arts* in Kerala used fine materials, were financially supported, were considered important, jacquard looms were used, carpenters, silversmiths, weavers, tailors and costume workers were highly skilled, had good tools and enough time to carry out their work' (my emphasis). The use of the term 'the arts' was deliberate. Avoiding the term 'crafts', the items were 'artistic', and thereby highly valued.

Entering the museum in Worthing, visitors were confronted with a large poster that advertised the display. The title 'East Meets West' communicated the idea of movement, encounter and interaction. As Indian art forms, Kathakali and Bharathanatyam stood for 'East', but were linked to the United Kingdom. During one of her talks, Barbara explained that migrants 'had brought the art forms with them'. The sections on Morris dancing, the history of the Downland shepherds, and the Romani Gypsy community represented 'West'. More precisely, West meant West Sussex, where the groups, and the museum itself, were situated. The Gypsy part of the display also signified movement from East to West. The catalogue noted that the '[ancestors of] the West Sussex Gypsy community ... left India around 1,500 years ago' (ibid.: 2).

Spatially and discursively recontextualized in processes of 'enframing' (Spyer and Steedly 2013: 9) and 'refocalisation' (Morris 2013), the costumes

were presented as celebrations of human expression, commitment and skill. The catalogue framed the items as follows:

For thousands of years our ancestors depended on nature to survive. As people evolved we made dances, costumes, poems, stories and music to express our eternal link with the world in which we lived. These are some of the remarkable traditions that have existed for centuries and carry the story of the people who preserved them. (Vijayakumar 2015: i)

[The making of the costumes] require[d] passion, commitment and skill. They were also created, preserved and nurtured within agricultural communities that share a common respect for the land. (Ibid.: 1)

The transit of the costumes to the museum space, and their transition as exhibits in the 'East Meets West' display can be usefully explored through the lens of creativity-as-improvisation. As Barbara was making different curatorial decisions, the meaning and function of the objects changed: they no longer covered moving bodies, but instead became static museum pieces to be quietly looked at, appreciated and compared. In the catalogue, similarities and differences were mapped in a table, and several references were made to their status as 'heritage'.⁷ The focus on heritage was consistent with the agenda of the funders, the Heritage Lottery Fund, a body that aims to 'demonstrate the value of heritage to modern life'.⁸

Developing ideas for the exhibition, Barbara had worked separately with various individuals and organizations that represented the participating groups, selecting artefacts for the display. Heritage production was clearly a 'negotiated process potentially involving numerous players and as expressive of more complex relationships with the past' (MacDonald 2008: 51). The concept was not a ready-made product, but evolved out of the cooperative process. In the resulting exhibition, the Morris dancers' section included both black-and-white outfits and colourful rag jackets, cross baldrics and decorated straw hats. The catalogue mentioned that they were part of 'an English folk tradition', first recorded in the fifteenth century (Vijayakumar 2015: 18). The Downland shepherds section included nineteenth-century smocks that had been taken from the museum's permanent collection and were presented, in the 'East Meets West' display, as objects that had 'evolved from an ancient culture' (ibid.: 37). Colourful Bharatanatyam attires were contextualized as 'exquisite costumes' that '[take] us back more than 2,000 years when this classical dance emerged from the Dravidian Hindu temples of Tamil Nadu' (ibid.: 15). Interestingly, the Romany Gypsy section was dominated by unique individual outfits that had been produced by the academically trained artist Delaine Le Bas. It was important, Barbara told me, to undermine stereotypical and negative images of Gypsy history and

culture, as these had led to persecution, slavery, torture and discrimination (ibid.: 23). By including works of a successful contemporary artist, who had been accepted by the mainstream art world, Barbara hoped to communicate an alternative view of ‘her Gypsy culture’.⁹ Reifying a bounded notion of Gypsy culture, she wrote that the works of Le Bas:

incorporate the use of embroidery, fabrics and costume to create large multi-media installation work with sound, photographic and moving images. They include motifs *from her culture* and imagery depicting the ‘other’, different ways, of seeing and working that *stretch back across time* and many countries that ties her contemporary artworks with the present context, *history and heritage of her people* and those who find themselves on the ‘outside’. (Ibid.: 28, my emphasis)

The only other artist who was represented through several works was Barbara herself. On display were the colourful abstract costumes that she had made in the 1970s for Centre Ocean Stream Performance Art Company. This was a time, she told me, when she had taken a prominent position as director, costume producer and choreographer, in a collaborative artistic project. By contrast, in the world of Kathakali, she held a relatively low position in a hierarchical order of actors (most valued), musicians (one rank below) and (below that) producers of costumes and makeup. Barbara strongly objected to this ranking system. In her view, Kathakali actors could only act effectively when wearing the right attire, so the input of makeup artists and costume makers should have been equally valued. The ‘East Meets West’ exhibition countered the common actor-focused spotlight on Kathakali by placing the costume design and makeup techniques centre stage.¹⁰

Barbara and VJ also organized a Kathakali Costume Conservation Workshop that was attended by some of the people who had helped to create the exhibition.¹¹ Like the exhibition, the concern of the workshop was with ‘heritage’, and it particularly focused on ‘heritage protection’. The alignment of this focus with the agenda of the funding body, the Heritage Lottery Fund, was emphasized by the participation of a representative from the organization, sent to assess the project. Participants were given the task of repairing jewellery worn on stage by the Kathakali characters, sticking pieces of gold leaf on the wooden material. On one of the last pages, the exhibition catalogue stated: ‘The people involved are very proud of their heritage and pass knowledge from one generation to the next to ensure that their customs survive’ (ibid.: 37).

As Barbara saw it, heritage development had to be open to experimentation and change. This idea was also communicated on the very last page of the catalogue. Under the heading ‘The traditions of Southern India and

West Sussex', three photographs were printed. The first showed a close-up of the legs of a Morris dancer from Sompting Village, wearing trousers decorated with bells. In the second photograph, Kalamandalam Nelliyo Ashan performed a Hindu *puja* (ritual) to 'bless the 2006 Kathakali UK tour'. The third showed a boy wearing a self-made, Kathakali-inspired paper mask. The caption said: 'The future – our children *take inspiration* from the traditions around them, *make something of their own* and *our heritage is made*' (ibid.: 39, my emphasis).

The case shows that heritage, so often claimed to be a stable property of a particular national, ethnic or religious group, is in fact actively, and creatively, produced. The artefacts, reclassified in the museum context, crossed fluid boundaries of 'craft', 'art' and 'culture', gaining new appeal as products of 'human dexterity' and 'heritage'. The curatorial process involved reproduction and reconfiguration, and was influenced by institutional expectations and individual choice. In Barbara's case, her strong belief in creative cooperation and her dislike of social hierarchies was reflected in her curatorial decisions.

Discourses of Creativity and Cultural Value

Stressing the temporal and relational dimension of creativity, Ingold and Hallam (2007: 19) have argued that creative acts are 'intrinsic to the very processes of social and cultural life'. Taking a stance in the long-standing debate concerning the extra/ordinariness of creativity (Pope 2005: 53), their model emphasizes the ordinariness of everyday being and becoming in the world. Like Bakhtin (1990), who has taken a performative approach to language as a dialogic, anticipatory process, Ingold and Hallam's understanding of creative cultural production assumes that people draw on elements from the past as they improvise and experiment in emerging environments. Conceptualized as improvisation, creativity can thus be regarded as a common aspect of cultural production. As already pointed out, this means that it is necessary to explore 'the extent to which cultural forms are produced and reproduced, rather than merely replicated and transmitted, through the active and experimental engagement over time and in generation of persons within their social and material environments' (<http://www.theasa.org/conferences/asa05/theme.shtml>, last accessed 02/03/2015).

In contrast, I will now turn the focus to the more limited notions of Creativity that, historically, have produced the problematic dichotomies of art-craft, art-religion and art-culture. As we will see, such conceptions were developed in Europe, and selectively circulated to other parts of the world.

Art-religion

The separation of ‘art’ and ‘religion’ is a relatively recent phenomenon, and is not common throughout the world (Elkins 2004: 5). Different religious traditions have promoted different views of creativity (Czikszentmihalyi 1996: 5), and these ideas have influenced the production of paintings, statues and other artefacts. Early Judeo-Christian understandings claimed that creativity stemmed from acts of divine creation of which human creativity was another product (Kruse 2003).¹² This perspective has been visualized in numerous religious representations, for example in fourth-century mosaic depictions of Old and New Testament scenes in the church of Santa Costanza in Rome.

In Europe the idea of the *human* creator was initially developed within the Christian paradigm (Prior 2002). It was central to the development of a separate professional field of ‘fine arts’ in Europe, a process that started in fifteenth-century Italy when painters and sculptors like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci set up their own art studios, distinguishing themselves from artisans who worked collectively through guilds. Michelangelo’s early sixteenth-century fresco in the Sistine Chapel, for example, did not only depict the creative power of a (human-looking) Almighty God, but also indexed human artistic creativity, defined as a capacity of inspired genius or extraordinary being. Classified by critics as works of timeless, universal beauty, products of ‘fine art’ were incorporated in a new field of ‘art history’, pioneered by Giorgio Vasari (Hauser 1968[1951]; Kempers 1992[1987]). They included paintings with Christian themes that were commissioned by rich and powerful art patrons who held positions of authority in European courts. These artworks were placed in churches and royal galleries, where they not only mediated God’s presence, but also increased the status of their producers and commissioners.

Art patronage elevated the status of the artistic genius while relegating the artisan to the status of less creative but skilled technician (Baxandall 1972). This perspective underplayed the importance of relational sociality and collaboration to productive processes and failed to acknowledge that discourses, practices and embodied experiences of creativity are entangled with changing politics of value that take place in specific times and places.

The idea of human creativity was further informed by a discourse of personhood that evolved in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe and construed people as clearly bounded bodies with innate talents and personal responsibilities (Hirsch and Macdonald 2007: 186; Stallybrass and White 1986). Fine artists in Europe had also started to ‘enjoy a degree of professional and financial stability’, which, towards the end of the eighteenth century, led to their works and creativity being viewed through a non-religious prism (Prior 2002: 17; Elkins 2004: 7). Walter Benjamin (1936) coined the

terms ‘cult value’ and ‘exhibition value’ to indicate an emerging distinction between the valuation of *religious* artefacts that were placed in sacred places such as churches, and *artistic* objects that circulated in worlds of art. Fields of artistic and religious practice were slowly disentangled, a process characteristic of Western modernity (Belting 1994; Blumenberg 1983). The relation of ‘art’ and ‘religion’ has, however, remained complex, not only because the former emerged from the latter, but also because many artistic and religious ideologies are based on a belief in the aesthetic or spiritually uplifting transformative power of beauty or the divine (Elkins 2004). The resulting experience is often mediated through engagement with artefacts, a process either denied or hypercognized in different religious traditions (Belting 2001; Meyer 2010, 2012; Morgan 1998, 2010).

In the globalizing context of colonial empire building, religious and artistic notions of material production and creativity that were dominant in Europe entered other parts of the world, including Africa and India. When the British began colonizing India, systems of royal and religious patronage characterized professional art production. As in pre-Renaissance Europe, the artist’s status was ‘humble and traditionally defined, irrespective of the caste they belonged to’ (Mitter 1994: 13). While specific individual producers, renowned for their skills, were in high demand, individual artists did not sign their work and there was no elaborate discourse of individual artistic creativity (Levy et al. 2008: 18).¹³ Hindu temple artefacts, for example, were manufactured by hereditary professionals, such as bronze casters and stone sculptors. They learnt the skills from older family members and improvised within the boundaries of specific rules of measurement, form and design, stipulated by the *Shilpa Shastras* (Dye 2001: 71).¹⁴ There were no clear-cut distinctions between fields of ‘art’ and ‘religion’.

Driven by a belief in the superiority of their religious convictions, Christian missionaries fiercely opposed the belief systems they encountered. A primitive mindset, they argued, manifested itself through superstition and irrational fears of the ‘fetish’.¹⁵ The production and worship of ‘cult objects’ was deemed blasphemous and uncultured (Meyer 2010; Mitter 1977). Influenced by Darwin’s biological evolutionism, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anthropologists like Edward B. Tylor and Lewis H. Morgan constructed theories of social evolution that projected an image of European civilized ‘culture’, opposing it to the primitive ‘nature’ of non-European social forms. Colonial administrators also attempted to impose specific discourses of productivity on colonial subjects through educational policies, as already discussed at the beginning of this introduction. The British, for example, while admiring the artefacts produced by skilled artisans in India, ridiculed classical temple art, disparaging depictions of Hindu gods as weird monstrosities.¹⁶ Some praised them as exotic pieces of ‘oriental art’, while still classifying them as examples of repetitive ‘tradition’.

Art-Culture

From the eighteenth century onwards, creative hierarchies were also reproduced in Europe in newly established museums of art and ethnography. The transitional process revalued exhibits that had appeared in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century curiosity cabinets and princely collections, and classified new acquisitions (Clifford 1988; Karp and Lavine 1991; Prior 2002; Impey and MacGregor 1985; Svašek 2007: 123–153). In national art museums, selected works by European fine artists were displayed in particular spatial arrangements to display the genius of the imagined nations (Duncan 191; Honour 1979). In ethnographic museums, first established during the first half of the nineteenth century, artefacts taken from non-European contexts were recontextualized as examples of ‘tribal cultures’ that were less developed than those of the colonizing powers (Fabian 1983, 1998; Chapman 1985; Stocking 1985). The art-culture dichotomy had clear political aims, justifying colonial domination (Clifford 1988). The classification not only sustained the false idea that creativity signified a higher state of human evolution, it also ignored the fact that non-European artists consciously strove for newness, and found inspiration in places across the globe. In nineteenth-century India, Ravi Varma, for example, appropriated European romantic painting styles, and Tagore was inspired by Japanese visual genres (Mitter 1994).

From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, the idea of human creative imagination was increasingly linked to the ability to produce ‘something new or novel in contradistinction to the “imitation” of something old’ in industrializing Europe (Pope 2005: 38; Hall 2010: ix). New production methods enabled relatively cheap, large-scale reproduction of goods that were affordable to larger consumer groups. The abundance of mass-produced identical or similar-looking items fed a cult of artistic originality and authenticity, a process that was reinforced by the invention of cheap photographic reproduction in the nineteenth century (Benjamin 1955).

Partly as a consequence of the cult of the unique, in Europe and the United States many fine artists began to perceive the reproduction of religious imagery as unimaginative practice. They either moved away from religious themes or strongly diverged from genres typically found in church settings, instead creating works that were ‘inimical to ordinary liturgical use’ (Elkins 2004: 11).¹⁷ This did not mean that Christian devotional pictures disappeared from public life (Freedberg 1989; Elkins 2004: 7), but rather that artistic and religious infrastructures were far less intertwined than they had been before. This was not the case in nineteenth- and twentieth-century colonial India where, despite the collapse of the traditional patronage system, much image production remained closely tied to religious frames of value, from bronze-making (Levy et al. 2008) to calendar art (Jain 2007).¹⁸ Working for new consumer groups, many printmakers, painters and sculptors, whether

self-made or those trained in the newly established art academies, depicted religious themes, both in response to market demands and as contributions to identity politics (Jain 2003; Mitter 1994; Ramaswamy 2003).

From the nineteenth century onwards, industrialization intensified and increasingly resulted in tensions between ideals of originality and the demand for cheaply manufactured products. In a world perceived by some social commentators to be increasingly tainted by capitalist values, binding people into chains of interdependence, fine artists in Europe were idealized as the last bastions of freedom, imagined as independent individuals who, through their creative acts, had direct access to a realm of artistic transcendence (Wolff 1981, 1983; Zolberg 1990). Various discourses replicated this view, opposing the superior creative abilities of fine artists to the supposedly inferior activities of commercial industrial manufacturers, skilled craftspeople and immoral producers of pornography and kitsch (Svašek 2007: 154–190). While the more successful European fine artists were thus given a quasi-religious status as free creators of ‘authentic’ culture, their products, nevertheless, remained embedded in interrelated processes of production and consumption, as they gained or lost appeal and value within the economic frameworks of developing art markets. The ‘commodity potential’ (Appadurai 1986) of specific artistic styles thus influenced the ‘social lives’ (*ibid.*), of particular works.¹⁹

Creation-Production

In the late nineteenth century, socialist and communist paradigms began to challenge the myth of artistic freedom by exposing the binding mechanisms of capitalist economies that, in their view, only served the interest of a cosmopolitan bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels 1967[1848]: 83). Marxist scholars argued that artists should stop subscribing to a mystifying, alienating ideology of creativity (Fischer 1959; Jícha 1950). Instead of making elitist, formalist art, they should reject the class-based system, identify themselves as workers, and actively propagate Communism through their visual work. The reframing of art production as work of equal value to other types of labour clearly served a political goal, aimed at the transformation of both individuals and society as a whole (Wolff 1981). State-controlled and -censored institutional structures in the Communist Eastern Bloc, Cuba and China were used to sponsor and authorize the activities of artists who took on the new paradigm. As with the so-called free, individual artists in the capitalist West, they were heralded as propagators of a higher political truth (Svasek 1996: 61). Not surprisingly, art, understood as ‘creation’ or ‘production’, became an important ideological battlefield in Cold War politics, played out across the world (Lindey 1990; Craven 1999). Several chapters in this book explore the politicization of art, particularly in contexts of

nationalism, colonialism and postcolonialism, showing how artefacts and images in transit can gain specific political meaning and impact.²⁰

Since the 1980s, as a result of the introduction neoliberal economic policies across the world, the discourse of ‘creativity and innovation’ has become a political mantra, and the related category of ‘creative industries’ has been used by numerous governments to mobilize workers and industry, for example by promoting market-driven cultural production and flexible working practices (Bharucha 2010; Garnham 2005; Lofgren 2001). Educational policies have similarly promoted the creation of ‘flexible and creative individuals’ who must continuously adapt to a rapidly changing world resulting from technological development (Leach 2007: 109). The trope of the creative and innovative producer has once again been questioned, this time by critical commentators and scholars who object not to change, but who question the claim that change itself has inherent transformative value. Siding with these scholars, this book seeks to contribute to this debate, drawing critical attention to changing and conflicting discourses of creation and creativity that authorize and authenticate specific modes of being. Providing a global perspective on the improvisational dynamics of material production, it aims to highlight the complex political, economic, institutional and technological conditions that shape not only the actual products, but also the underlying ideologies of practice. Undermining the association of creativity with individual, ‘artistic’ genius and novelty, and imploding dichotomies of art-craft, art-religion and art-culture, the chapters demonstrate that both imitation and change are part and parcel of creative improvisation. They show that reproduction and remediation of existing forms and styles take place within dynamic chains of local and translocal interaction.. This perspective allows for critical analysis of regimes of value that vest cultural forms with a particular appeal, and draws attention to the conflicts that ensue when certain objects, particularly those considered sacred, enter alternative spheres of representation. Also key here is the link between sensation and emotion: how people feel about, and feel through engagements with material objects (Meyer 2006; Mitchell 1997; Morgan 2009; Svašek 2012a); how they produce, manage, control and subvert specific expectations in unique temporal-spatial situations, improvising within the context of certain constraints, be they ‘temporal, material, technical, genre-specific, linguistic, cultural, or societal’ (Landgraf 2011: 17; MacClancy 1997).

The Chapters of This Book

The contributors explore creative processes of (re)production and ideologies of creativity in overlapping fields of fashion, craft, art, museum curation and

religious practice. The first two chapters focus on the fashion industry. In chapter 1, Barbara Plankensteiner disentangles the long history of dealings between Austrian industrial manufacturers of lace and Nigerian buyers of the product. Considered by many Nigerians as a traditional African fabric, African lace is the product of a dynamic process of transcontinental, multi-local productivity with a (pre)history of several centuries. Clearly showing that 'traditions' are always in the making, Plankensteiner traces the movements of creative ideas and their back-and-forth appropriation across continents, arguing that the end products epitomize the interlaced nature of global relationships. In the production process, raw materials from Asia, exported to the west Austrian town of Vorarlberg, have turned into luxury fabrics, used to create Nigerian 'national costumes'. The designs, products of trial and error, are based on older hand embroidery techniques and weaving styles apparent in Turkey, Austria, southern Nigeria and the coastal areas of the Congo. Newly introduced production processes have stimulated the remediation of older patterns and the production of new designs, thus catering for customers who desire products that are both recognizably 'African lace' and 'refreshing'. The improvisational process ends with the consumers, who create and manage social identities through dress, playfully combining specific garments and using lace as part of their everyday performance of self. The case of African lace shows that 'creativity' cannot be reduced to the activities of one individual, or even to the activities of people within one geographical region, as the agency of Austrian designers and manufacturers *and* of Nigerian importers and consumers have had an important impact on the final product and its development over the years.

Chapter 2, by Tereza Kuldova, brings to light how, despite the interdependency of designers and makers in the creative process of fashion production, a dichotomous concept of creativity has operated in the contemporary Indian fashion industry. An ideology of high art versus low craft has shaped relationships and distinctions between New Delhi-based designers and embroiderers from Lucknow, thus bringing two categories of 'artist-designers' and 'craftspeople' into being. Traditional Indian crafts are essential in the work of most contemporary Indian fashion designers, and the perfectly crafted embroideries and embellishments are often the unique selling point of these garments. On the part of the designers, however, the idea of individual creativity as an intellectual endeavor, has often served as a legitimization of existing hierarchical relations in which producers of crafts are represented as mere manual workers. The creativity of the latter is effectively denied and power relations are perpetuated; craft workers are seen as frozen in a static traditionalist framework in which they are incapable of innovation and therefore unworthy of being called creative in the modern sense of the word, a perception criticized by various embroiderers in Lucknow. At

the same time, craft producers are idealized in the narratives of the fashion designers as representative of the 'real' India, associated with romanticized village life, becoming therefore an ambiguous subject.

In chapter 3, Kala Shreen further explores the image of craft production as static tradition, focusing on recent developments in Tamil Nadu. Agreeing with Ingold and Hallam's objection to the conceptualization of creativity as pure newness, she does however share Liep's (2001) interest in the production of designs that have new forms and functions. Her emphasis on innovative production is directly related to her intention to critically question the 'dynamic art – static craft' opposition. The chapter investigates how plaited palm leaf basket designs, traditionally produced by a particular south Indian ethnic group and used in ritual contexts, have been executed in more permanent materials such as silver. Appropriating different style elements, a wide range of non-ritual artefacts has emerged. Identifying a growing clientele base, Shreen demonstrates that visiting migrants and foreign tourists, who have taken the items to other continents, have changed the products' meaning and impact in new social contexts, such as lounges and office spaces. Shreen also considers the transformative potential of heritage policies aimed at the women who produce these innovative products for new markets. Participating in competitions and demonstrating their skills at craft fairs, several craftswomen have emerged as individual creators, a process that blurs the classificatory boundaries of contemporary art and traditional craft. Digital media have also reframed the designs as works of a superior aesthetic quality, presenting them as works of art to anyone accessing the websites from localities around the globe.

In chapter 4, Amit Desai is also concerned with creative production in Tamil Nadu in the light of global audiences. He scrutinizes activities in three sites in the state capital of Chennai, where places are made creative in different ways, with different intentions: Art Chennai, Cholamandal and Dakshinachitra. In the process, artistic people and institutions in the city negotiate and reconstitute different meanings of creativity and innovation, with the aim to transform the city into a 'world-class' place. Art Chennai intends to be a global art event, branding the city as a space on a par with other major cities around the world that house international art fairs and biennales. The history of the nearby art village of Cholamandal that was established in the 1960s, unveils a complexity of artistic practices, where artists of different backgrounds and generations take different and changing positions in the production of selves as postcolonial subjects, rooted in local place but taking inspiration from globally circulating styles. In Dakshinachitra, an open-air museum, politics of heritage are played out, in an ethnographic style common in other countries around the world. Desai's analysis shows how, through a politics of urban space intending to attract international

investment, artists and their products are framed as signifiers of global quality.

In chapter 5, Arnd Schneider investigates practices of appropriation from indigenous cultures among urban-based potters in Posadas, the capital of Misiones province in northeast Argentina, and Santa Ana, a small nearby town, and former Jesuit Mission. His analysis builds on earlier work (Schneider 2003, 2006; Schneider and Wright 2006), in which he argued that appropriation is best understood as an interpretive hermeneutic practice that goes beyond a simple act of taking cultural forms out of context and transplanting them into a new one. Appropriation entails a learning process, and thus requires active cognitive engagement. The potters and ceramicists in Schneider's study were inspired by the ancient pottery of the Guaraní indigenous people and experimented with different techniques, aiming to get similar results through the learning process. As such, they positioned themselves as close to, but different from, the indigenous Other, preferring the term 'approximation' to 'appropriation' in evaluating their actions. Reproduced in new times, the designs gained new significance and emotional appeal, framing the makers as Argentinians, interested in, and thereby producing the idea of, local history and culture. The process was influenced by social imaginaries of multicultural nationhood and heritage, ideas with a global circulation.

Chapter 6 by Øivind Fuglerud explores intertwining processes of local, national and transnational material production through the perspective of 'positioned creativity'. Fuglerud is critical of a notion of creativity-as-improvisation that does not pay attention to the institutional and political forces that shape the possibilities and limitations of cultural production. Creativity, he argues, is always 'positioned' in the sense that it plays out in dynamic social and political fields. The chapter focuses particularly on the impact of large-scale political forces on artefact-focused institutional practice. Based on a comparison between British Columbia in Canada, and Norway, and the respective roles played by the Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, and the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, his chapter scrutinizes the interaction and interchange between museums and their social surroundings, conceptualizing them as historical agents that contribute to the formation of society through visualizing technologies. Addressing historically specific creative ideologies that have opposed 'art' to 'craft' and 'primitive' to 'developed' production in both contexts, he provides a fascinating comparative analysis of political constructions and curatorial framings of 'native art'. Pointing out that artistic and curatorial practices have been linked to ideologies of nationhood, he explores how the two museums have shaped the understanding of what constitute authentic national treasures worthy of display. His analysis also highlights the appropriating strate-

gies by native artists in both geographical settings, who in the Canadian case often draw on designs considered to be traditionally native, but in the Norwegian case are less likely to position themselves through recognizably 'indigenous' visual repertoires.

In chapter 7, Fiona Magowan and Maria Øien turn the focus to the interface of art, politics and religion, exploring the production of Aboriginal art in the nexus between Christian aesthetics and Ancestral painting conventions. The authors discuss the impact of denominational differences between Catholic and Protestant doctrine and practice on Aboriginal Christian faith, belief, aesthetic practice and subjectivity. Their analysis compares and contrasts the work of artists living in two remote mission-based communities, Nauiyu and Galiwin'ku in the Northern Territory. Locating their activities within historical infrastructures of centuries of missionary activity, they discuss the changing creative opportunities and constraints offered in globally connected sites. The chapter argues that expressions of Christian Aboriginal art and belief are embodied in processual states of becoming, created in an intersection of Christian aesthetics and Ancestral painting conventions. The entanglements raise questions about continuities and discontinuities of personhood, religiosity, denominational practice and collective rights in art. The chapter further locates Christian Aboriginal artistic expressions within the Australian art market and shows how this context has provided Aboriginal communities with recognition, income and a voice in the Australian nation-state, while potentially limiting output and productivity due to art critics' perceptions of Christian Aboriginal art as syncretic or inauthentic.

The remaining four chapters explore sensorial and emotional aspects of transition-transformation dialectics, examining how artefacts come to mediate religious authority when appropriated in specific public and private spaces, such as home shrines, churches and temples. They show that, circulating through local, national and transnational networks, specific sacred images gain value and appeal as they come to make up the religious life worlds of people in different locations. As in the earlier chapter by Magowan and Øien, historical processes of religious configuration and transnational authorization have influenced these contemporary improvisations. In chapter 8, by Maruška Svašek, the central focus is on pictures and statues in the homes of Hindu families in Northern Ireland who are of Indian descent. The artefacts include depictions of Hindu gods, photographs of relatives and gurus, wedding cards and other items. Svašek explores how absent gods, kin and the sacred homeland are given affective presence through material objects in a process of transition and transformation. The chapter shows that tradition is a dynamic process whereby familiar images are mediated and remediated in sometimes unexpected ways, afforded by new technologies. Examining the shrine of one family, the analysis explores the meaning and

impact of material artefacts and images, examining how their earlier social lives and creative curatorial decisions have shaped their significance within the home shrine context. The question addressed is to what extent individual improvisational performances of careful ritual attention are informed, not only by affective and religious regimes that stretch across the globe, but also by playfulness and notions of beauty.

In chapter 9, Stine Bruland also discusses traditional practices of religious ritual engagement in people's homes. The chapter zooms in on sensorial practices and the use of sacred artefacts across the religious divide between Hinduism and Catholicism among Sri Lankan Tamils residing in Paris, showing that religious practices in the Tamil diaspora are closely linked to traditions in Sri Lanka. She argues that, in a political situation in which processes of religious identification (as Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and Christians) have tended towards ethnification and have informed the escalation of violence, shared religious aesthetics among Tamil Hindus and Tamil Catholics in Sri Lanka and Paris reflect the absence of tensions and violence between these two Tamil groups. Their shared aesthetics include ritual practices such as the clockwise circulation of incense, the use of flower garlands and the worship of Mother Mary, all part of Tamil Catholic and Tamil Hindu prayers. Rather than classifying these practices into religious categories to confirm bounded religious traditions, she argues for a need to examine how such practices come to be shared. By employing a material approach to religious aesthetics that recognizes that material things are active and have agency, affecting how we sense and thus experience our world, she contends that the use of the same or similar objects and practices should be understood as a creative process of achieving crucial experiences and emotions in prayer, rather than being written off as religious syncretism. In both cases, the aesthetic elements are able to produce strong feelings of religiosity, mediating a sense of closeness to the divine.

João Rickli also addresses the theme of material mediation and religiosity in chapter 10, in his analysis of the shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida, the patron saint of Brazil. Pilgrimage to this shrine is one of the most popular devotional practices of Brazilian Catholicism, attracting millions of devotees every year. The chapter investigates dynamics of creativity and innovation involved in the production, circulation and consumption of religious objects and images, and explores their aestheticization as mediators of the divine. Rickli follows the century-long transitions of the 'original' image found in 1717, as it became a powerful sensational form that is able to mobilize a large number of believers and articulate different national and transnational forces. The chapter also explores the transit of people and objects as part of the devotional tradition. Taking the shrine as the centre of extensive networks of devotees and devotional objects, the author identifies two main

directions of circulation: on the one hand, the centripetal flux of people and artefacts from different parts of the country and the world, towards the shrine; on the other hand, the centrifugal spread of objects, images, values, religious power and people from Aparecida's shrine to the whole of Brazil and beyond. The chapter also analyses the politics of authenticity and persuasiveness implicated in the material production and circulation of devotional objects, arguing that the production and reproduction of such objects depends on constant and continuous interactions between official and popular beliefs and practices.

In the final chapter, Rhoda Woets addresses the omnipresence of depictions of Jesus in Ghana's public and private spheres in the form of both mass-produced and hand-painted posters, stickers, billboards, screensavers, cement statues, plastic crucifixes and rosaries. These objects and pictures, often based on a renowned eighteenth-century painting of the Sacred Heart, are bought, commissioned, displayed and used by Christians of all denominations, who imbue them with spiritual power through the senses and body. In so doing, they draw on historically grounded uses of religious objects and modes of interaction with the divine. This means that Jesus pictures are more than a medium that provides access to the supernatural; when charged with spiritual power, they become part of sensations of supernatural immediacy. In transit and transition, the objects thus move from the profane to the sacred through touch, intense prayer, blessing and particular bodily regimes. This dynamic encounter between believers and religious objects is embedded in historical relations of power and authority.

The tournaments of competing values (Appadurai 1986) surrounding creative production and appropriation are marked by histories of interaction and technologies of mediation that link times, venues and people in complex ways. As we shall see in all the chapters that follow, cultural producers always work in situations that offer possibilities and pose constraints. Disagreements and contestations about creativity often betray underlying social inequalities that need to be critically examined. Only through careful ethnographic research and analysis can the intertwined politics and poetics of creative improvisation become visible. As the contributors to this book will show, such analysis requires a global perspective that acknowledges the complexities of local and translocal movements, and critically questions discourses of art, craft, tradition, modernity, heritage and culture.

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Notes

1. Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (1996: 107) also defined creativity as process leading to newness, defining it as ‘any act, idea or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one’.
2. Those criticizing Jazz for this supposed lack of constraint saw this impulsiveness as a sign of unsophisticated subjectivity. See for example, Schuller 1968. These views have reinforced a loaded notion of uncontrolled primitive Otherness, opposing it to the idea of the highly civilized European Classical composer (Gilroy 1995; Townsend 2000: 8; Gabbard 2004). McCormack (2012: 1) has argued that the discourse on the ‘transcendental improvising subject’ is based on American ideologies of individuality and freedom, a view that ignores diversities of Jazz practice around the world (cf. Gebhardt 2001: 134). With regard to Indian classical music, the trope of improvisation as magical route to transcendence and spiritual freedom has been widespread since the 1960s (Napier 2006: 3).
3. His viewpoint also undermined a dichotomous understanding of ‘improvisation versus composition’, in which composition is valued as a mental act of thinking and constructing, superior to the supposedly uncontrolled bodily act of improvisation. See also McMullen (2010) concerning the privileging of ‘mind-over-body’ models in Western music, and Friedman (2001: 60) on creativity as a ‘negentropic’, as opposed to ‘entropic’, phenomenon.
4. Christiane Brosius and Rolan Wenzhuemer (2011) have employed the term ‘transcultural image flows’ to describe the reproduction and remediation of visual images, producing new image configurations. The resulting products, made up of images taken from cultural settings around the world, materialize the very idea of global movement across times and places, and across artistic, religious and other cultural spheres.
5. Drawing on Bakhtin (1993), Hastrup (2010: 195) has used the term ‘eventness of being’ to make this point.

6. I also played a role in this 'religious' contextualization, as Barbara and VJ had asked me to give an additional talk to the pupils on migration and religious artefacts.
7. The Kathakali and Bharatanatyam costumes were comparable because both were 'sacred'; the actors/dancers who wore them represented Hindu gods. The use of bells to highlight rhythm was another similarity, connecting Kathakali, Bharatanatyam and Morris dance performers. By contrast, Downland shepherds tied bells to their sheep. The table also identified 'gold' and 'jewellery' as material linking Kathakali, Bharatanatyam and Gypsy traditions.
8. 'From the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks we love, from precious memories to rare wildlife ... we use money raised by National Lottery players to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about' (<http://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us#.VTvsus0h2ok>, last accessed 20 April 2015).
9. Le Bas has also used sound, photography and moving images in multimedia installations that were not part of the exhibition.
10. Images of Kathakali acting were, however, present, shown on a video in the exhibition space, and on several occasions when VJ performed in full attire for different audiences.
11. Several Morris dancers, descendants of Downland shepherds, and three Romani Gypsy artists, including Delaine Le Bas, participated in the event.
12. This is reflected in the following biblical texts: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made' (John 1:1–3). 'By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible' (Hebrews 11:3). By contrast, according to various Hindu sources, the universe has been created by the sacred sound of 'om'. As outlined in the Vedas, this sound is the manifestation of an omnipresent, immaterial divine energy that can be made immanent through devotional practices. In this view, creation is regarded as a phase in an endless cycle of creation, preservation and destruction, embodied in the divine figures of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva (Flood 2004; Huyler 1999).
13. The recent rise of temple building in India and abroad, and the construction of websites by bronze casters, stone carvers and other producers of Hindu icons as part of their business strategies has made them less anonymous, emphasizing the significance of personal artistic skills in individually crafted or cocreated works in a global arena (Waghorne 2004).
14. Specific Sanskrit concepts formulated in the Hindu Vedas have construed humans as fluid elements in cycles of creation and destruction. The notion of reincarnation (*samsara*), refers to this process of energy flow, a transformational cycle that can be broken through salvation (*moksa*), which is realized when *atman*, the essence of self, dissolves in the divine essence of the universe (*brahman*) (Flood 84–6). Devotees can actively aim to experience the Divine through meditation and God image worship, the latter becoming 'the central liturgical program for public religion in India' by the eighth century (Davis 1997: 37).

15. As Bruno Latour (2010) has pointed out, the idea of the fetish was part of a series of dichotomies central to Modernist discourse, opposing primitive to modern, passion to reason, fiction to fact, false belief to true reality, constraint to freedom, subjectivity to objectivity and object agency to subject agency.
16. Comments by eighteenth century traveller J. Ives after his trip to India illustrate how art-craft oppositions were used to reinforce notions of European artistic superiority. He noted: 'The Indian mechanics are by no means deficient in the handicraft arts, yet their talents seem to be only of a second rate kind. In many respects they certainly do not seem to come up to the dexterity of European artists, particularly in those works where great accuracy is required. They likewise labour under a poverty of genius which makes them dull at invention' (Ives 1773: 53, quoted by Marshall 1990: 57 and Svašek 2007: 98).
17. Elkins (2004: 11) referred to the forms that Christianity took in the work of nineteenth-century painters such as Friedrich, Runge, William Blake, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Samuel Palmer.
18. This collection of Sanskrit and Tamil texts, written for those working in artistic professions, is still being used today, for example by the bronze sculptors in Tamil Nadu (Levy et al. 2008: 18).
19. Making similar arguments, other terms used to describe this are 'careers' (Zolberg 1990) or 'cultural biographies' (Kopytoff 1986).
20. See the chapters by Fuglerud, Desai and Woets, this volume.

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