



Suzi Gablik
Conversations before the end of time



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Dialogues on Art, Life &
 Spiritual Renewal with

James Hillman Arthur Danto

Richard Shusterman Ellen Dissanayake

Hilton Kramer Coco Fusco Carol Becker

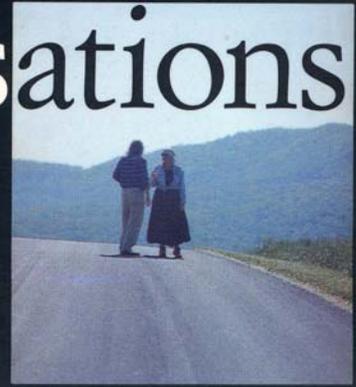
Theodore Roszak Guerrilla Girls David

Plante Mary Jane Jacob Rachel Dutton

& Rob Olds Christopher Manes Thomas

Moore Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

Laurie Zuckerman Leo Castelli



The Aesthetics of Everyday Life: BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, In
Conversations before the end of time, interviews by Suzi Gablik (New York: Thames
and Hudson, 1995), 410-433.

When I met Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett for the first time at the “Crossing Cultures” conference in Barcelona, I had no previous knowledge of her or her work, but I knew immediately when I heard her mind-spinning lecture that I wanted a representative taste of her pungent, firebomb intelligence in this book. We finally caught up with each other several months later in New York City, in the Soho apartment where she lives with her artist-husband,[p.411] Max Gimblett, surrounded by a quantity of books that would make Susan Sontag’s library look positively Lilliputian. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is a professor in the Performance Studies Department at New York University, where she teaches a course on “The Aesthetics of Everyday Life.” In addition to her academic hat, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes herself as a “curator of vernacular practices,” which, it turns out, includes things like the Easter Parade, conversational narrative, street life, gardens and even food. In fact, shortly after our conversation, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett was headed for Cardiff Wales, to participate in a three-day international conference exploring the overlaps between performance, food and cooking. The program of events, which she helped to organize, sounded extraordinary: cooking demonstrations; workshops and performances involving food, cooking and eating; scholarly papers; films and illustrated talks; and highly provocative food events, such as a traditional Georgian banquet, in which participants performed theatrical toasts and songs they had been taught at a prior workshop. I had no idea such extravagant things went on in the normally cool-headed academic world, but after studying the brochure, I realized how ignorant I was about the subjects of Chinese noodle-pulling; the making of wedding cakes and the divine role of fasting.

My interest in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett was magnetized [p.412] by her philosophical grasp of how suspect Eurocentric assumptions about popular culture and indigenous traditions are entrenched in the politics of art theory and in museological modes of display. There is a subtle marginalizing process that has deep roots in colonialism and cuts to the heart of the multicultural debates of today. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, for instance, objects in museums are examined and framed by means of “long labels, charts and diagrams, docents conducting tours, booklets and catalogues, educational programs, and lectures and performances “ Such conventions exert strong cognitive control over the objects displayed, and in the case of primitive or ethnographic art, may have little or no connection with the cultural meaning or intention of the objects themselves, when they are not being thus transposed and filtered into Western high-art terms. Western categories and attitudes are regularly imposed on non-Western cultures, however, often distorting their original meaning by decontextualizing the objects and isolating them for display. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett claims that under the guise of neutrality, their presentation in a museum context actually becomes a litmus test that determines whether or not such objects “holdup” as art, once they have been stripped of their original context and reclassified within Western terms and contexts.

*Such works are then viewed as “universal” tran-[p.413]scending space and time, and their original context is deemed irrelevant. In *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*, Marianna Torgovnick, a professor of English at Duke University, writes: “Within the dominant narrative as told by art historians, the ‘elevation’ of primitive objects into art is often implicitly seen as the aesthetic equivalent of decolonization, as bringing Others into the ‘mainstream’ in a way that ethnographic studies, by their very nature, could not. Yet that ‘elevation’ in a sense reproduces in the aesthetic realm, the dynamics of colonialism, since Western standards control the flow of the ‘mainstream’ and can bestow or withhold the label ‘art.’ “ Indeed, this is exactly what happened in relation to the 1993 Whitney Biennial.*

Words like “folk,” “ethnic,” and “primitive” define a kind of art that, although it may exist in the present, is not necessarily of the present; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett would say such art is “contemporaneous” but it is not contemporary. This way of using time to mark and structure difference is a linchpin of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s thinking; inspired by the work of Johannes Fabian. We talk a lot about space in relation to art, she claims, but we don’t talk about time. Within the Western idea of the “primitive,” time stands still and does not lead to a changing future. Whereas the idea of progress provides a distinct arrow of linear time and suggests evolution toward a state of greater complexity, the [p.414] idea of eternal repetition leads to nondevelopment. Hidden in these distinctions is a concealed devaluing of art that is not progressive in the manner of Western art movements, and is not driven by an avant-garde sensibility. Such art is not “innovative.”

“The hegemonic,” declares Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “does not represent itself as ethnic—or as multicultural.” It believes it transcends cultural differences and that it is the relatively impregnable center, which has the power to not be defined as multicultural. Viewing itself as if it were a universal culture, the hegemonic never acknowledges how it marginalizes certain cultures and elevates others. Instead, it makes transcendent claims to speak for everyone—even while suggesting itself as distinct from all these Others. Regarding the current debates about decentering this curatorial authority, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett asks quite baldly: Are we ready for it? Are we ready to break out of the art world jails? In Barcelona, she described the challenge as one of “in reach”—not “outreach,” in the sense of trying to get art out to “them” or to get “them” into museums—but rather of embracing artmaking that goes on outside the art world. Are we ready to see the audience, or public, or community as artists in their own right? (This was the provocation taken up by artists who participated in Mary Jane Jacob’s “Culture in Action” program in Chicago.) Can we learn [p.415] to come together in the same time? “Community,” says Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, in another of her gnomic, challenging and in-a-nutshell pronouncements, “as I understand it, is not audience or public. I think it’s a euphemism for the disenfranchised whom the museum does not serve very well.”

The following conversation took place on Friday, December 3, 1993.

SUZI GABLIK: When we met at the conference in Barcelona last summer, Barbara, you described yourself to me as a “curator of the vernacular arts.” I was very intrigued by that, even though I’m not exactly sure what it means. I know you teach a course at N.Y.U. on “the aesthetics of everyday life” and I’d love to know what that’s about. One of the emerging themes of this book has been the notion that the locus for art may be shifting away from galleries and museums and into the life world. Does this relate at all to the work that you do?

BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT.GIMBLETT: I guess I start from the premise that the possibilities for art are something that everybody has—in other words, everybody has something inherently creative and artistic in them. And it’s in the nature of social life that there are ways to realize those possibilities; in fact, those possibilities are what make the world a habitable place. [p.416] So this spring, for example, I’ll teach my “Aesthetics of Everyday Life” course and we’ll do a variety of things. One of the questions I ask is, how do people reclaim public space and how do they make it their own in a large city like New York, where so much is controlled by the powers-that-be, by the state, by governmental institutions, by big business? My interest is in the everyday practices that ordinary people engage in on a daily basis to contend with those kinds of organizations,

structures and sources of power. For example, I'm interested in gardens— not the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, but gardens that are produced, let's say, by people who don't own any land, who do not live in the suburbs and have a yard or a patch of ground in which something can be grown. And so, what I see here is a form of improvisation that is, for me, a key to survival. Improvisation is really where I would start in thinking about an aesthetics of everyday life.

SG: Are these gardens, then, created for aesthetic reasons, or are they used for survival purposes, as in growing vegetables?

BKG: I don't make that distinction. What I don't like about the distinction is the notion that to be art, something has to be strictly for beauty. The arts of everyday life are highly utilitarian arts: they give form to value. That, for me, is what an art of everyday life is, something that gives form to value. Let me try to talk about all this in terms of what it is [p.417] not. It's not about bringing art back into the everyday world, because I don't believe it ever left. And it's not about discovering that what we normally consider as art in museums or galleries also occurs in the everyday world. It's neither of those. It is about the arts of living, by which I mean giving value meaningful form.

SG: When you refer to the arts of living, does this involve daily activities and actions and interactions more than it does objects?

BKG: It involves everything. It includes domestic interiors, the table, food, language. It also includes the arts of sociability, conversation, etiquette and dress. On a larger scale, it's about gardens, parades, processions all of which are very much alive in our time. So it's a mistake to think you have to go to rural Spain to find them. All you have to do is walk out on the Lower East Side on Good Friday to see Stations of the Cross processions that are extraordinary. They are performance art *par excellence*. That is where the action is.

SG: You've said that this art is not professional, but that it's not amateur either. In Barcelona, we talked about how this kind of art is contemporaneous with the contemporary—that is, happening at the same time—but that our basically white, Western elitist culture doesn't count any of this as art, because it isn't part of the art world. [p.418]

BKG: Correct.

SG: This is probably what we need to talk about: why it isn't considered art by the art world, and how your views on all this differ.

BKG: Let me say this: I'm not worried about the art world catching it, or recognizing it. That doesn't interest me, because the difference between what I call the arts of living and the art world has to do with differences in their mode of exchange. There's a fundamental paradox in the art world, because the ultimate value of art is seen to lie in its immediate commercial value. Cut it any way you want, the art world is basically a commercial market, where the stakes are extremely high. I don't know of anything in the world of that physical size and weight that can command those kinds of prices, and I take that as a defining feature of the art world.

SG: Do you feel that this compromises the power of art, or does it serve to enhance its

power?

BKG: Oh, in my humble opinion, money has nothing to do with aesthetic power: it is about the market. In my view, aesthetic power has nothing to do with money. So art that is defined by the art world and all its institutions is not personally where my heart is and not where my interests are.

SG: If we take you as a case in point, then, it would seem as if there's no convincing argument to be made that these worlds may now be coming together. [p.419]

BKG: Let me pick up again on that notion of the work of artists who are not professionals but are not amateurs either, and of work that is truly "contemporary" and not just contemporaneous, because that's really an important issue. The amateur-professional distinction is, for me, largely an art-world distinction, and I don't want to import art-world categories and art-world values into this realm that I'm calling the vernacular, because I think what that does is prepare the ground for the art world to *absorb* that which is happening in everyday life, and I'm not interested in the art world absorbing it.

SG: You'd prefer to see it stay in its own context.

BKG: Yes, in its own terms, and making its own way. To give you an example: the people who put on these Stations of the Cross processions: What does it mean to ask whether they're amateurs or professionals? That's not a meaningful distinction. Do you say of people who are pious and who venerate a saint-do you ask if they're amateurs or professionals? It's an irrelevant distinction.

SG: I'd like to talk about this distinction for a bit in relation to the responses that were triggered by the 1993 Whitney Biennial. So much of the criticism that was leveled at the show declared that this was art by amateurs, that it consisted of one-liners rather than masterpieces, and that it lacked aesthetic skill. Somehow I suspect that your take on all this may be [p.420] very different from the vast body of critical reviews that quite effectively made mincemeat of it all.

BKG: First of all, I would say that the amateur-professional distinction is a gatekeeping operation. It's a way to keep some people in and some people out: that's what the distinction is about.

SG: But the people who disagree with this and hated the show would say this isn't true. They'd say that we did let these artists in, only to find that they had nothing interesting to offer.

BKG: Yes, but that's gatekeeping in retrospect—they never should have been let in in the first place. This distinction is upheld in the form of criticism, and the criticism will then govern future actions. So it's gatekeeping any way you want to count it.

SG: The heat of the arguments seem to focus on the politicization of art, and the claim that as soon as you let politics in the door, aesthetics goes out the window. Many people felt this show had little or no aesthetic value. Was that true for you?

BKG: All these distinctions are meaningless to me. They're meaningless because all art

is political. Some art makes political issues an overt subject, but don't tell me that formalism's not political. To suggest that some art is political and some art isn't— [p.421] SG: What about the notion that some art is aesthetic and some is not?

BKG: Also bullshit, if you'll pardon me for saying so.

SG: No, please do. Be my guest.

BKG: If by aesthetics one means beauty, virtuosity and skill—and when one says that, one is referring to materials and execution, and particularly to practices that are learned within a fine art tradition in an institutional setting with accreditation—that's a very specific definition of what "art" is. But if you take my approach, which has to do with giving value form, that form may or may not be beautiful; it may or may not be virtuosic; it may or may not be an exemplar of craft. But meaningful form and value for me are at the heart of what art is.

SG: So for you, the Whitney show was value-packed?

BKG: Of course, and form-packed as well. And full of deep commitment. If that's not art, what is?

SG: Why do you suppose it soured people so much?

BKG: Because I think there are vested interests, and this was a show that was in-your-face. In some ways the show was doomed from the outset because of a peculiar convergence between the artists that were chosen and the kind of work that was shown, which [p.422] is to say that those who are normally excluded showed work that addressed the conditions of their exclusion. Now, it could have gone a different way. You could have had the same people doing work like what everybody always does, or you could have had the people who are normally here doing work that addresses political issues. Neither of these possibilities would have had the power of the convergence that we saw at the Whitney. But that convergence is essentially a no-win situation, because it's in-your-face, and it gets written off as being nothing more than a slap of a particular kind that says, "You excluded us, and now that we're here, we're going to remind you of all the reasons that you excluded us, and of all the repercussions of having excluded us, and of all the pain that you created by excluding us—and not just artistically, but also socially, economically, historically, culturally, et cetera."

SG: Do you think the artists who did this, and the curators who invited them in, were aware of the intense drama they would generate, or do you think they only realized how threatening it all was after it took off in such a negative and baleful way?

BKG: I think that the Whitney tried to "do the right thing." I do believe it was utterly sincere. I personally think it was a wonderful show: it was challenging, interesting, troubling. I don't have to like everything I see in order to find it worthwhile. Lik- [p.423] ing it is not a measure of worth, of value. To be exposed to some artists I had not seen before, to see others in this context, to see these works in relationship to each other, to see a very strong curatorial hand pursuing a set of issues, themes and concerns was, for me, very valuable and very useful. I don't believe that this institution was itself adequately prepared for how to receive what it had produced, because its modes of aesthetic reception are not equipped for this. And so in some ways one could say that the show was

ahead of the institution. And I don't know if the institution wants to catch up.

SG: Mary Jane Jacob made an interesting comment. She said that what the show really made clear was that an institutional setting like the Whitney isn't the right venue for this kind of art.

BKG: Well, yes and no. Because the other side is that these are legitimate artists, serious artists, who deserve to have the "same" success, recognition, income and enduring impact as any other artist working in our society.

SG: How do you get around the neoconservative backlash, and their claim that we've run our culture very advantageously thus far as a meritocracy, and that these artists just don't measure up?

BKG: To what standard? [p.424]

SG: To the intellectual and aesthetic standards that are the basis of Western civilization—to the canon.

BKG: Ah yes, but you see, "quality" is the new racism. It's a code word. "Not good enough" is a code word for the exclusion of parties that used to be excluded on a more candid basis.

SG: You mean that, previously, they weren't even part of the debate. Their work wasn't even discussed or shown.

BKG: Once you cannot exclude individuals for the reasons that are now laid out—race, gender, sexual preference, physical appearance, age, disability, you name it—once those are no longer mentionable, what have you got left but merit? And that isn't to say that there aren't genuine standards, and that everybody shouldn't meet them. I'm completely for standards. I'm even a fiend for standards. But I'm also extremely aware and very sensitive to the use of a merit argument as a new weapon of exclusion.

SG: So what is the issue around standards, then? Is it that they need to be reconstituted to accommodate a different value structure and a different kind of art that doesn't lend itself to being measured by the existing standards, or what?

BKG: The incredible thing about the art world—and what has been the European tradition of fine art and aesthetics—is that it has built into itself a survival [p.425] mechanism. The survival mechanism is the idea of merit. All the language of universality, that art is a universal language, that standards are absolute and not relative, that the standards can be stated and that they can be used as a measuring stick for anyone or anything at any point in any time, that they are inherent, that they are not culturally or historically determined, that great art transcends time and place and outlasts all others, that great works are produced by great artists, the whole concept of masterpieces and the whole profession of connoisseurship, all of that is an architecture to sustain the status quo, in my humble opinion. And what happens is that all the absolutism, the totalism, the essentialism, the universalism—until that position is properly understood, it will continue to exclude and define in the way that it has always done. As long as that assurance, that confidence, in the unassailability of aesthetic values and standards continues, nothing will change.

SG: I've just been reading a collection of essays in *Partisan Review* on "The Politics of Political Correctness" and it seems to be the considered opinion of almost every one of the writers that in this dismantling of the basic principles of the meritocracy and the deconstructive assault on the canon, we have effectively sanctioned the death of Western civilization.

BKG: Look, the canon is not the Tablets of the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. That view of [p.426] the canon, that genius springs up unpredictably and when it springs up, its excellence is unassailable and will endure through the ages—what can I say? The position is doomed.

SG: What about all the great art in museums that everybody goes to see because it seems to fulfill that very notion?

BKG: Yes, fine. But it's not the only thing that we do; it's not the only thing that we support; it's not the only thing that we're interested in. This discussion arose because of the question as to whether or not the Whitney is the right place for certain art. And the notion that the Whitney is only the right place for the canon, what is that saying? That we're going to have minority art institutions for the rest? That you have to give each constituency its own place to be second-rate? It's a strategy that we know: this is basically apartheid. It's aesthetic apartheid. It's a way to spatialize difference. It's a way of zoning difference and then saying, "You can have it all; just don't put it in the same building. Don't put it in my collection. You're going to sully the water. It doesn't merit. It's not good enough."

SG: It will bring the level of everything else down.

BKG: Right. And here's what I don't understand. You tell me: after Duchamp's urinal, how can we have this conversation? After Dada, how can we have this conversation?

[p.427] SG: It sounds to me like you've said the definitive words on that issue. Let's go back to the contemporary/contemporaneous notion. You've said that the difference between the contemporary and the contemporaneous is that the contemporary is avant-garde and progressive, and so that's the art that we're interested in. Then there's all this other stuff like folk, ethnic, primitive—and now we can add Whitney Biennial—art, which is somehow contemporaneous with the contemporary, but we're less interested in it because it's not really the cutting edge.

BKG: Correct. The avant-garde is the truly contemporary, "pushing the envelope," as they say in the art world. It's part of the history of the avant-garde to always be in tension with the institutions of the art world. It is inherent in the nature of the avant-garde for it to make an institutional attack. The paradox of the avant-garde is that it needs the institutions, and it hates the institutions. But formalism allowed it to live in relative peace, if not in a perfectly symbiotic relationship with the institutions, whereas the work in the Whitney is all about making the institutions very uncomfortable, and if it can do so in their very belly, all the better. That is both its success—because it is an irritant, it is a slap—and its failure. But it's certainly in that spirit of the avant-garde, which is to be resistant, to be abrasive. And the appropriate response is discomfort.

SG: And yet, it doesn't seem to have been recognized or acknowledged as belonging to that avant-garde [p.428] tradition that we grew up with, which didn't take itself to be

radical or serious enough unless it made people uncomfortable.

BKG: Yes, but you see, modern avant-gardism did all of that increasingly within the history of art itself. And this work is saying no to a kind of hermetic aesthetic sphere.

SG: I recently spoke with somebody who said that when he was told to wear Daniel J. Martinez's admission button ("I can't imagine ever wanting to be white") at the show, he refused to go in. He was unwilling to compromise his white male identity by wearing that message on his lapel.

BKG: Well, then the button did its job! I would say it was a very successful work because, by and large, most of the art that's out there doesn't provoke a strong reaction. And since when is a strong reaction a sign of failure? But I'd still like to address this other idea of the contemporary, which is where my own work lies, and that has to do with the arts of everyday life—which I believe are *fully* contemporary, and not only contemporaneous. I'm always very wary of another stratagem, which is not unlike the meritocracy argument but uses *time* as a way of saying that some art is in the present moving forward, and other art is in time, holding a position that is basically static—a position of the past. That's another way of insulting, or misrepresenting, these other areas. [p.429]

SG: In one of your essays you ask, "Is anything really possible now? Are art museums ready to take seriously art which is made outside the art world?" What is your answer to this question?

BKG: Historically, the art world has taken very seriously art made outside itself—but not the artists. The modernism-primitivism show at the Museum of Modern Art a few years ago was a beautiful case in point. One of the defining features of the avant-garde is its refusal to confine itself to the products of a strictly fine-art world. Its interest in, and use of aesthetic principles and ideas and sensibilities from other cultures—like Brecht confronting Chinese opera for the first time in Europe or Picasso confronting African sculpture—is a far cry from recognizing, or treating as on a par, or having a genuine relationship with, the artists that produced these works.

SG: But in many cases, the artists would have been long since dead, wouldn't they?

BKG: But that's for me the unfortunate assumption. A lot of the work I'm talking about is not archaeological, and not only that, it's the dilemma, for example, of the Museum for African Art, when the general public wants to see the old African material. The museum also wants to deal with contemporary African artists. Otherwise, it's like saying these other parts of the world don't have their own indigenous modern art tradition. I think we need to scrap the distinctions and start all over again.

SG: Would you say the more radical versions of multiculturalism are taking us somewhere productive?

BKG: I do believe that things are changing. I know this best from the academy, which is where I spend most of my time. The academy is not now what it was when I entered the university in the early sixties, and I can assure you it's not what it was in the 1920s, and the difference is finally coming to awareness that major institutional changes have to be made if inclusion is to become a reality. And inclusion cannot carry the price tag that

it has carried, historically, which has been to leave *difference* behind. Inclusion, in the past, was not put forward as forcefully and as loudly and as eloquently as it is being put forward today. And it's being put forward by an intelligentsia arising from the ranks of those who have historically been excluded—that's a huge difference. It's absolutely huge.

SG: Rather than being put forward by the dominant culture, or the “oppressors” themselves.

BKG: Correct. The process is much slower in some places than in others. I think the art world is especially slow to move, partly because it has what I would call a “large installed base,” by which I mean so many institutions and so much money sewed up in the status quo. Its investment and capital outlay are [p.431] so extraordinary that it will be slower to change, I think, than smaller, more nimble, less entrenched sectors.

SG: Would you say that there is a movement toward bringing art back into everyday life more than within modernism?

BKG: My general feeling is this. I think my experience in the academy is reflective to some degree of what's happening in the art world, so let me start with that. I experience myself on ground in which tectonic plates are shifting, that's how I experience the world in which I live professionally. These tectonic plates are the historical disciplines—history, literature, art history—that are relatively recent disciplines from the late nineteenth century. Particularly in the academy, a hundred years of human history is nothing, it's a spit in the bucket. But because it's the hundred years that has defined our moment, it seems like it's been there forever. My sense is, within this ground of tectonic shifting, that disciplinary lines are blurring. As we become much more aware of the political formation of knowledge, and how it gets institutionalized in departments and programs, it becomes much harder to defend those arrangements. And so I consider my era a kind of postdisciplinary era. It's beyond disciplines—antidisciplinary. I'm not interested in upholding the boundaries of purity and integrity of whatever it might be—literature, history, art history, whatever. Interdisciplinary says [p.432] the more disciplines the better, but postdisciplinary says, “Forget them.” Who needs them? Take a problem and go anywhere you need for the material. So it's a very, very different orientation. I feel the same holds true for assumptions about culture. The university has organized its fields around a notion of culture that is an expression of nationalism. If you look at the organization of departments, they are all organized around the concept of a nation—I mean, what is English literature? Only recently does it include the colonies, and that's Empire. Any way you cut it, these disciplines are historically formed out of political arrangements. But that is now being challenged. And I believe that the kind of work that was in the Whitney, and what it represents, is being played out in the academy as well as in the arts. The fact of the matter is that for most of human history, and in most parts of the world *to this day*, no such disciplinary separations exist.

SG: But if we blur all those boundaries back to what they once were, won't that cause us to lose the integrity of the professional spheres?

BKG: Once one forms these units, they have a life of their own, and they will perpetuate themselves indefinitely. So that's not my project. Unless something radical happens, the status quo has a fantastic ability to sustain itself. What I'm interested in is destabilizing the assurance that these divisions are the most meaningful ones and that the

reasons normally given [p.433] for sustaining that kind of specialization should go uncontested. For many years I chaired a department of performance studies where I now teach, and it stands for an integrated approach to the arts. It says that we will never succeed in truly coming to grips with artistic traditions outside of Europe as long as we insist on the divisions we've insisted upon. We will continue to have a curriculum structured in terms of "the West and the rest" as long as we have the arts parceled out in the way that we do.

SG: Because the divisions are a function of our particular world view, so the others will never really fit into it.

BKG: You have to put them in with a shoe horn. In order to be able to fit these forms in, so much of what makes them what they are will be left behind. What I'm saying is that our disciplinary formations are part and parcel of the history of our subjects. That means that the history of the arts in the West is reflected in the departments that have been created to study them. There's a fit between their history and the institutionalization of the study of them. And that fit is so culturally and historically specific that it is extremely difficult to alter so that it can properly address the arts of the world that are not organized that way. Music departments offer a world music course: that takes care of that! A course on non-Western art in Art History: that takes care of that! A course on world literature: do we need more? It's the West and the rest—it's not a solution.