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“Art – Nations – World”

The 1960 International Congress of the AICA in Poland and Discussions on the International Character of Modern Art

Introduction

Until now, international conferences pertaining to art and art history have not figured as a central research theme in art history scholarship. When they have been taken up as subjects for scholarly discussion, it has only been to mention them briefly in the interests of historiography or as a nod to the historical development of art research. However, as Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann argues in *Toward a Geography of Art*, particularly in his chapters on the history of art scholarship from a geographical perspective, analysis of the international conference scene is a valuable and effective tool which sheds light on the art history research and art scholarship of the day.¹ DaCosta Kaufmann refers mainly to the congresses of the International Committee of the History of Art (Comité International d’Histoire de l’Art, commonly abbreviated as CIHA), but this study will focus instead on one of the international congresses of the International Association of Art Critics (Association Internationale des Critiques d’Art, commonly abbreviated as AICA). Though the AICA’s sphere of influence and the scale of its activities are smaller than those of the CIHA, one can argue that the AICA congress offers more important hints to understanding international trends in modern and contemporary art scholarship. For one thing, discussions at CIHA congresses rarely made reference to contemporary art. Moreover, the CIHA generally publishes a printed report after each international congress, while AICA reports sometimes take the form of typewritten documents which are difficult to find even in libraries. What is more, perhaps because its consciousness is so firmly rooted in the present, the AICA has shown little inclination to document its own history. As a result, there would appear to be a pressing need to compile a detailed record of the AICA’s activities for posterity.

¹ DaCosta Kaufmann (2004).

Some years ago, an article of mine titled “Hans Ludwig Cohn Jaffé 1915–1984: From the Bildung to the Ethica of De Stijl” appeared in *Studies in Western Art No. 4, Special Issue: Art History and the Jew* (published in 2000).² When I was examining Hans Jaffé’s voluminous personal archive at the Hague’s RKD (Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, the Netherlands Institute for Art History) in order to write that article, I came across quite a few documents relating to the 1960 International Congress of the AICA held in Warsaw, Poland. In the above article, I focused solely on aspects of the Congress which pertained directly to Jaffé, but I took a keen interest in the Congress itself in the sense that it vividly reflected the circumstances in which the art world found itself in 1960. I believed that the events of this Congress merited a place in the study of 20th century art.

Later, when I stayed at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw as a researcher for the Polish Academy of Sciences (Polska Akademia Nauk, hereby abbreviated as PAN) from 2004 to 2005, I perused AICA archives for information on the 1960 Congress. This study summarizes the findings of this investigative research. I mainly examined two archives: the Starzyński Archive housed in the special collection of PAN’s Institute of Art (Instytut Sztuki), and the archive of the AICA Polish Section. The latter archive is under the supervision of Ms. Dorota Monkiewicz, Curator of the Department for Contemporary Art at the Muzeum Narodowe (National Museum) in Warsaw as well as President of the Polish Section of the AICA.³

² Kodera (2000: 111–132).

³ I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Jerzy Malinowski of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, his wife Barbara Malinowska, Curator at the National Museum in Warsaw, and Dorota Monkiewicz, Curator at the National Museum in Warsaw and President of the AICA Polish Section, for their kind efforts and cooperation in the course of my investigative research. Incidentally, the Starzyński Archive at PAN’s Institute of Art is open to the public, but the archive of the AICA Polish Section cannot be

Outline of the Congress

The AICA (Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art) began as a pair of international congresses held at the Paris UNESCO Headquarters in 1948 and 1949, and was officially launched as a non-governmental organization the following year in 1950.⁴ The third and subsequent international congresses were held in 1951 (Amsterdam), 1953 (Dublin), 1954 (Istanbul), and 1957 (Naples). The 1960 Congress in Poland, whose events are the subject of this study, was the Seventh International Congress of the AICA. It was held from September 6 to 14, 1960 in Warsaw and Krakow, under the theme of “Art – Nations – World” (*L'Art – Les Nations – L'Univers / Sztuka – Narody – Świat*).⁵ According to the official program,

viewed by the general public at present. In addition to these archives, I also investigated storage vaults at the PAN Institute of Art which are separate from its special collection, as well as documents in the Photographic Materials Department of the National Museum in Warsaw.

The names of the archives below will henceforth be abbreviated as follows.

PAN Institute of Art Starzyński Archive: SA-PAN.

AICA Polish Section Archive: AICA-P.

⁴ For basic information on the AICA, see <http://www.aica-int.org/> and *Histoires* (2002).

⁵ Below is an excerpt from the English part of the official congress program, VIIth International Congress of Art Critics. Warszawa–Kraków, 6–13 IX 1960 (Instytut Sztuki PAN). The text of the program as a whole is printed in three languages, English, French and Polish.

PROGRAM

Monday, 5th September

Arrival and lodging of participants. Registration at the Congress Office and distribution of materials.

Tuesday, 6th September

9 a.m. Meeting of the Membership Commission

10 a.m. Meeting of the Committee

11 a.m. Opening session at the Staszic Palace – seat of the Polish Academy of Sciences

12 noon Film “Varsovie quand même” (at the cinema Wars, Rynek Nowego Miasta) preceded by a conference on planning and architecture of new Warsaw given by Mr. Stanisław Jankowski, engineer-architect.

2 p.m. Lunch

4 p.m. Visit of the city

9 p.m. Visit of the National Museum's exhibitions: 1. Polish art from the half [sic] of the 18th century to our days; 2. Tadeusz Makowski 1882–1932; 3. Polish graphic art in the 20th century; 4. Polish contemporary poster. Cocktail given by the Director of the National Museum in Warsaw

Wednesday, 7th September

9 a.m. First working session. Theme: Modern art as an international phenomenon

4 p.m. Visit of the National Museum

6 p.m. Cocktail given by the presidents of the Association of Polish Architects, of the Association of Polish Artists, of the Association of Art Historians and of the Polish Section of the IAAC

a General Assembly, various commission meetings, and three main working sessions were held over the course of five days, from September 6 to 10, in Warsaw (Plate 1). On the 11th, the venue moved to Krakow, and excursions were made to the site of the concentration camp at Oświęcim (formerly Auschwitz), the tourist and ski resort of Zakopane, which is renowned for its folk art and architecture, and various other locations.

Thursday, 8th September

9 a.m. Meeting of the Commissions

3 p.m. General Assembly

Only full members of IAAC may participate in the commission meetings and the General Assembly. At the same time the members “adherents” and the accompanying persons will visit Żelazowa Wola, Nieborów, Arkadia and Łowicz

9 p.m. Visit of the exhibition at the Gallery “Krzywe Koło”

Friday, 9th September

9 a.m. Second working session. Theme: Modern art and the artistic contribution of the numerous traditions and tendencies of different nations

4 p.m. Visit of the exhibition: “Folklore inspirations in Polish Industrial design and craftsmanship” – foyer of the National Theatre

5.30 p.m. Visit of exhibitions in galleries

Saturday, 10th September

9 a.m. Third working session. Theme: Modern art and the perspectives of development of art of different nations

Afternoon free

8 p.m. Reception given by the Minister of Culture and Art

Sunday, 11th September

9 a.m. Departure to Cracow by autocars through Radom, Szydłowiec, Wąchock, Kielce, Chęciny, Jędrzejów (lunch on the way)

6 p.m. Arrival to Cracow

9 p.m. Opening of the exhibition: Polish contemporary graphic art

Monday, 12th September

9 a.m. Visit of the town in groups: Barbican, St. Florian Gate, the Market, Virgin Mary's Church, University, Wawel

12.45 p.m. Departure by autocars from Wawel to the Ethnographic Museum

3.45 p.m. Departure to Nowa Huta. Visit of the town terminated by a conference on the sociological problems of this town given by Mr. Tadeusz Ptaszycki, engineer-architect

9 p.m. Visit of the National Museum – cocktail given by the Director of the Museum

Tuesday, 13th September

9 a.m. Departure to Oświęcim (Auschwitz) – visit of the Museum of the Concentration Camp

3 p.m. Return to Cracow

Free (museums and exhibitions available)

9 p.m. Meeting with artists and critics of art at the Gallery “Krzysztofory”

Wednesday, 14th September

9 a.m. Departure by autocars to Zakopane, visit of the monuments of wooden architecture on the way

4 p.m. Those of the participants who go on the tour in Czechoslovakia cross the border at Łysa Polana, the others return to Cracow



Plate 1. Staszic Palace (Pałac Staszica), home of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) and site of the AICA International Congress of 1960

Special tours were conducted of places of scenic and historic interest, national art museums, and art galleries in the Warsaw and Krakow areas, and art museums held special exhibitions to coincide with the Congress. The National Museum, the Association of Polish Architects, and the Ministry of Culture and Art, among others, held special receptions. While this sort of added entertainment remains a customary part of the program at international academic conferences today, the special event schedule at this particular Congress seems to have been particularly full, with tours and receptions being held almost daily. This study, however, will not touch on these special events, and will focus instead on the three working sessions of the Congress.

The organizers of the “Art – Nations – World” Congress in Poland decided to address the overall theme along three separate lines of discussion, in three main sessions indicated as follows:

1. Modern art as an international phenomenon;
2. Modern art as an outcome and expression of diverse national traditions and tendencies;
3. Modern art and the perspectives of development of art of different nations.

As is evident from these three titles, discussions at the Congress centered around ways of reconciling the international character of modern art with the national and popular character of art in general. For Jaffé, a Jew who believed wholeheartedly in the value of modern art as an international and universal phenomenon, it goes without saying that this theme was of prime importance.⁶ Jaffé acted as Chair of the Third Working Session, and the great many materials pertaining to the Congress which remain today in his personal archive are evidence that he must have sympathized greatly with the Congress’ aims.

This study will examine the process through which these themes for the Congress were adopted by the AICA, and analyze the discussion and debate which actually took place at the Congress. Finally, holding an international conference in 1960 in Cold War-era Poland was a delicate proposition, and I would like to shed some insight on the Congress as a “collective performance” on this precarious international stage.

⁶ See Kodera (2000: 111–132) for more detailed information.

The Road to Actualization and the “International Survey”

The President of the AICA Polish Section, which hosted the 1960 International Congress, was Juliusz Starzyński, the head of PAN’s Institute of Art and a professor at the University of Warsaw. Starzyński made painstaking preparations to realize the first AICA International Congress ever to be held in Eastern Europe, negotiating all the while with Poland’s socialist government of that time (Plate 2).

The theme of the Seventh AICA Congress had already been discussed by the International Congress Administrative Committee three years earlier, at the International Congress held in Naples and Palermo in the autumn of 1957. At that time, the theme of “Issues pertaining to the relation between different national traditions and the international character of modern art” was proposed. The AICA Polish Section, scheduled to host the next international congress, took up the proposal, which was debated by the Polish National Committee. The following year, in April of 1958, Starzyński formally proposed the themes of the Warsaw International Congress to the AICA General Assembly in Brussels. His proposal met with hearty approval, and the Polish Section embarked on thorough preparations for the congress. The next year, in December of 1959, an “international survey” was mailed to AICA national sections all around the world. In it, Starzyński explained the aims of the survey, and asked members to send in their responses on the following three themes.⁷

⁷ The following was consulted in relation to the discussions in Naples and Palermo: *Przegląd Artystyczny* (1960).

The following was consulted in regard to the General Assembly in Brussels: Starzyński (1960).

The Polish Section’s record of Congress proceedings contains a detailed account of the Section’s preparations for the event. I consulted the following materials:

Protokół z zebrania plenarnego Sekcji Polskiej AICA oraz Redakcji “Przeglądu Artystycznego” w Nieborowie. II dzień obrad (12 II 1958) – Sprawy organizacyjne Sekcji Polskiej AICA (SA-PAN, inv.1131-VII); Stenogram z posiedzenia Sekcji Polskiej AICA, odbytego w Instytucie Sztuki PAN w Warszawie w dniu 14 marca 1960 r. (AICA-P, D1/47); Protokół z Walnego Zgromadzenia Polskiej Sekcji AICA, które odbyło się dnia 14 III 1960 r. (AICA-P, D1/47).

I consulted the following in regard to the international survey and responses to it:

VII Congrès International des critiques d’art. Varsovie – septembre 1960. *l’art – les nations – l’univers, Enquête Internationale, Section Polonaise de L’AICA*. Typed document. Jaffé Archive (RKD, the Hague, consulted for article in Footnote 2), French version housed in AICA-P (D1/34), Polish copy housed in the PAN Institute of Art library (III43.924).

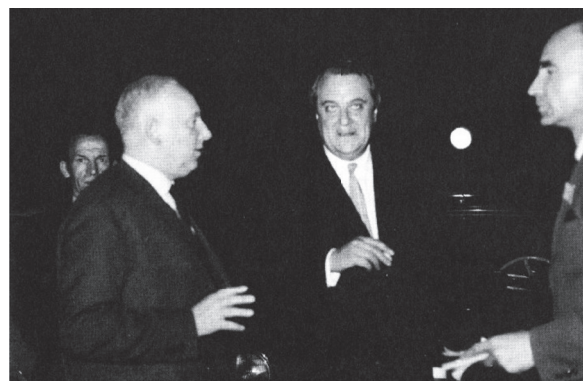


Plate 2. Juliusz Starzyński (left) and Jacques Lassaigue (center). (Photo taken during the 1960 Warsaw Congress. From *Histoire de 50 ans de l’AICA*, Paris 2002)

1. Modern art as an international phenomenon
Can we attest to a unified character of modern art? In what sense? If the argument can be made, then how should this unified character be understood? Unification of language? Of function? Of issues? Of the historical process? To what extent can we transcend national boundaries when it comes to different national experiences, within the context of the evolution of modern art?
2. Modern art and the artistic contribution of the numerous traditions and tendencies of different nations
We have much to learn from the multiple origins, methodologies and actualizations of modern art that the people of different nations have to offer. Is this knowledge sufficient and adequate? To what extent does this variety of origins contribute to enriching modern art?
3. Modern art and the perspectives of development of art of different nations

Is the course of development of art in various nations a process of unification, or one of differentiation? Will modern art erase the originality of the art of the world’s people, or will it contribute to the continuing and autonomous development of this originality? Art, the most noble and effective means of promoting understanding among the world’s people.

Responses to the survey which reached the Polish Section early appeared in *Przegląd Artystyczny* (the Artistic Review), a periodical published by PAN’s Institute of Art. All of the responses, including those which arrived late, were either sent to Congress participants or handed to them in person.⁸ Today,

⁸ *Przegląd Artystyczny* (1960). See Footnote 7 in regard to typed materials.

28 responses to the survey remain in the archives I examined. Breaking them down by nation, there are 10 responses from France, 4 from Poland, 3 from Yugoslavia, 2 each from the Netherlands and Italy, and 1 each from Colombia, East Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Brazil. Respondents include Pierre Restany, Waldemar George, Michel Ragon, Hans Jaffé, and Jan Białostocki. There were no responses from the American section, or from members of the Japanese Section, which was headed at the time by Shuzo Takiguchi.

For reference, the Congress Report printed after the event includes 64 names in its list of participants.⁹ The breakdown of participants by nation is as follows.

Poland	24 participants
France	8 participants
USA	4 participants
Italy	4 participants
Netherlands	4 participants
Czechoslovakia	4 participants
Brazil	3 participants
Turkey	3 participants
Yugoslavia	3 participants
West Germany	2 participants
Hungary	2 participants
Canada	1 participant
Israel	1 participant
Japan	1 participant
Mexico	1 participant
Open Section	1 participant

It goes without saying that there were many participants from Poland, the host nation. As reasons for the large number of French participants, one can cite the fact that the UNESCO and AICA headquarters are in Paris, as well as the fact that the host, Starzyński, specialized in French Romanticism as his field of research and enjoyed friendly relations with many figures in the French art world. Britain hosted the 1955 AICA General Assembly and British figures such as Herbert Read had ties to the organization, and yet for some reason there were no British participants. There was also little participation by East and West Germany. The Open Section (*Section Libre*) accounts for cases in which a person from a country with no AICA national section takes part in the congress on an individual basis. Of course, the above numbers merely represent the official count, and it is possible that there were actually a fair number of

participants who attended the Polish Congress unannounced on a last-minute basis.

The lone Japanese participant is listed as Yusuke Nakahara, though a memo of Jaffé's in his RKD archive lists two Japanese names: Nakahara and Takashina. According to the two people in question, Yusuke Nakahara and Shuji Takashina, Nakahara did in fact take part in the congress after arriving a day late, but Takashina did not attend. The archives at PAN's Institute of Art contain a letter to Starzyński from Shuzo Takiguchi, the President of the Japanese Section, stating that Eiji Usami would also attend. However, there is no known evidence at present which confirms whether Usami actually attended or not.

I would next like to turn my attention to responses to the survey. Though there appears to be a widely varying range of responses at first glance, there are in fact a few common features. For example, words like “Esperanto” and “Volapük” come up on a relatively frequent basis. Both are artificial languages devised for global use in the 19th century. As is well known, the creator of Esperanto was L.L. Zamenhof, a Pole of Jewish descent, while Volapük was devised by Johann Martin Schleyer, a Roman Catholic priest from Baden, Germany, in the late 19th century. These artificial languages are mentioned in respondents' arguments on the international character of modern art, usually as failed examples of internationalism to which modern art is favorably compared.

“Modern art is not, nor can it be, a completely new and artificially created language like Volapük or Esperanto. Rather, it displays diversity in the midst of unity” (Waldemar George, France).

“As I have already made clear, modern art does not shun the originality of diverse national traditions. It creates a common language, but this creation has endless variations depending on the degree of national development and national tendencies. The result is akin to the formation of various regional dialects within a language such as Volapük or Esperanto. And yet, in contrast to such artificial languages, modern art does not seek to ‘translate’ the creative content of various countries' people. Because it is global and universal by nature, it gives direct expression to this creativity with the utmost integrity” (France Stelè, Yugoslavia).

As far as one can tell from the survey responses and the subsequently published Congress Report, there seem to have been no dissenting views on the international and universal character of modern art, nor do any participants appear to

⁹ *AICA VIIe Congrès* (1960).

have denied its national and popular character. However, they generally take a negative view toward the intervention of the nation state, national institutions and politics in art. One participant stated that modern art is both an expression of a nation's popular spirit, and an international and universal mode of expression at the same time. Another emphasized the traditions of folklore and folk art over national, institutional and academic traditions. Other participants, like Pierre Restany and Jan Białostocki, assert that the conceptual counterpart of the “international” is not the “national,” but rather the “individual.” Whether stressing the “folkloric” or the “individual,” the participants' views show a basic tendency to view “the people” or “the individual artist” as conceptual counterparts to modern art's internationalism and universality, while questions of national and institutional involvement are kept out of the argument and out of sight.

The International Congress

At the International Congress venue, three working sessions with essentially the same titles as the three survey categories were held. The session titles, chairs and panelists were as follows.

1. Modern Art as an International Phenomenon
President: James Johnson Sweeney (USA)
Session Chair: Jacques Lassaigue (France)
Panelists: Giulio Carlo Argan (Italy), *Haim Gamzou* (Israel), Will Grohmann (West Germany), Juliusz Starzyński (Poland), S. Gille-Delafon (France)
2. Modern Art as an Outcome and Expression of Diverse National Traditions and Tendencies
President: James Johnson Sweeney (USA)
Session Chair: Giulio Carlo Argan (Italy)
Panelists: Haim Gamzou (Israel), Will Grohmann (West Germany), Mário Pedrosa (Brazil), Juliusz Starzyński (Poland), S. Gille-Delafon (France)
3. Modern Art and the Perspectives of Development of Art of Different Peoples
President: James Johnson Sweeney (USA)
Session Chair: Hans Jaffé (Netherlands)
Panelists: Giulio Carlo Argan (Italy), Haim Gamzou (Israel), Will Grohmann (West Germany), Mário Pedrosa (Brazil), Juliusz Starzyński (Poland), S. Gille-Delafon (France)

The AICA President at the time was James Johnson Sweeney, who resigned from his post as Director of the Guggenheim Museum in 1960, the year this Congress was held. As President, Sweeney delivered opening and closing remarks at the General Assembly and at every session; and while none of these comments are of particular import, he continuously made his presence felt throughout the event. I would now like to summarize the content of actual discussions at the Congress, based on the information in the Congress Report.¹⁰

At the First Session, “Modern Art as an International Phenomenon,” Jacques Lassaigue of the AICA French Section acted as Session Chair, and spoke after a short address by Sweeney. Lassaigue emphasized the French Section's contribution to the establishment of the AICA and the realization of the Warsaw International Congress, and expressed his gratitude to the host, Starzyński. His tone, however, almost makes it sound as if it was France that organized the Congress, through the services of a Polish scholar specializing in French art. Lassaigue goes on to lay out the issues for discussion, quoting at length from a letter to Starzyński written by Jean Cassou, who was unable to attend the Congress. In this same year of 1960, Cassou had been busy with preparations for a major exhibit, “Sources of the 20th Century,” and could not be present at the Warsaw Congress because the exhibition opening was close at hand. He had, however, sent a long letter to Starzyński.¹¹ Lassaigue read this letter almost in its entirety at the session. One can only guess that the motivation behind Lassaigue's performance of quoting from this letter at length was to further emphasize the ties between France and Poland, and for France to take the initiative at this Congress and in the AICA's activities in general.

In his letter, Cassou explains that he cannot attend the Congress because of preparations for the “Sources of the 20th Century” exhibition, and writes that Poland is a fitting location for a discussion on the popular and international character of modern art. He goes on to express his own views on the global nature of modern art in the passage below.

“Various developments in the world situation are moving the quest of contemporary art in the direction of a global lan-

¹⁰ *AICA Ville Congrès* (1960).

¹¹ Exhibition organized by Jean Cassou, Giulio Carlo Argan, Nikolaus Pevsner et al., *Les sources* (1960–1961). For a detailed study on this exhibition, see Persuy (1999: 30–63). (A Japanese translation by Takanobu Tobishima appears in *Studies in Western Art*, 10, Special Issue: *Exhibitions and Public Displays*, January (2004): 64–93).

guage. Surely this is a desirable tendency, for it indicates a shift toward the universality and humanism to which our French culture proudly aspires. Moreover, it will instill in our hearts a firm belief in the ever-growing necessity to peacefully and prosperously unite nation states and ethnic groups, which threaten to divide our world, on a steady common ground. And yet at the same time, there is something else we should wish for in this strong shift toward unification. Let us hope that artistic expression will always retain something of its roots, and that this ‘something’ will make itself heard in the grand orchestra of modern art, to be discerned and appreciated and to touch the human heart. For even in artistic expression which aspires to build a common edifice, there are ‘roots’ to be acknowledged – and these roots are none other than the artists themselves. As a unique individual, each artist possesses a singular life, destiny, fortune, temperament, language, and culture, and all of these are alive in the artist’s creations. All of these ‘roots’ are essential components in the artist’s creative originality, and together they surely bring the artist creative freedom. [...] There will be times when modern art moves toward a sort of formal unification, and also times when it veers away from it. However, ultimately destined for unification though it may be, there is another motivating force in modern art whose destiny is no less assured – the drive toward diversity. For this motivation toward diversity is none other than the driving force behind artistic creation, the wellspring of its energy, and testimony to a vibrant and free creativity [...] much like the vibrant and free spirit of the people.”¹²

In this passage, Cassou enthusiastically embraces the internationalism and universality of modern art as a destined outcome of the world situation. What is interesting is that he seeks at the same time to maintain the “roots” that artists represent, and to foster the coexistence of internationalism and universality with the “people’s spirit,” including the diverse range of individuals, cultures and languages this “spirit” entails.

After Lassaigne’s address in which he quotes from Cassou’s letter, Jan Białostocki makes some comments in a similar vein. He first compares modern art to Gothic and Baroque art, expressing his doubts that the style of modern art is in fact as international as Gothic and Baroque styles. He goes on to say that there are two opposing forces in modern art. On the one hand, the modern information delivery system, which speedily transmits information throughout the world, results in the for-

mation of a global language in the realm of art. On the other hand, the tendency from the 19th century onward toward the original, the individual and the unique stands at odds with this mighty common language.

“In this way, individualistic originality challenges the international Koine of painting and sculpture. Thus I believe that it is not the “popular” or the “national,” but the “individualistic” that should be placed in conceptual opposition to the “international.” [...] I expressed my doubts that modern art is actually as international as it is generally thought to be, but let me close my presentation with these thoughts. I do believe that 20th century art arose from varied international origins. Around 1910, elements of the Spanish and the French, of the Russian and the German, blended and bore fruit, thus enabling feats of creation which ushered in a new art. It is in this sense that we can, without a doubt, call the art of our age an international one.”¹³

Cassou and Białostocki both share a tendency to place terms such as “artists,” “diversity,” “the living people’s spirit,” the “individualistic,” and “varied origins” in conceptual opposition to the “international.” The terms they employ may differ, but both of them avoid placing the “national,” with its implications of state and politics, in opposition to the “international,” preferring for it to coexist with less politically charged concepts such as “the artist,” “the individual,” and the “living people’s spirit.”

After Białostocki’s comments, the Session Chair, Jacques Lassaigne, speaks again to introduce France Stelè, Bohdan Urbanowicz, René de Solier, Pierre Restany, Jean Dyréau, Mieczysław Wallis, Magda van Emde Boas, Guy Weelen, and René Jullian. In other words, the discussion did not progress as a free and spontaneous verbal exchange, but rather as a predetermined series of presentations following a more-or-less preconceived scenario. As for the content of the individual presentations, Stelè discussed how modern art differs from Volapük and Esperanto, much as he did in his response to the survey. Urbanowicz touched on industrial design and De Stijl. René de Solier invoked the names of Pierre Francastel and Henri Focillon, citing the notion of “place” (lieu) as a “Francastellian” concept. Van Emde Boas referred to the opposing concepts of the “exogeneous” and the “endogeneous,” while Weelen discussed the concept of “time.” In this way, there was a wide variety of presentation styles, but in spite of such stylistic variations it is no exaggeration to say that the gist of the

¹² *AICA VIIe Congrès* (1960: 13–14).

¹³ *AICA VIIe Congrès* (1960: 18).

presenters' arguments was more or less identical in its basic tendency. All of them acknowledge the international character of modern art, refer to the "individuality" of artists, people, races and roots, and balance the "international" with a non-political conceptualization of the "national."

In our present age of the early 21st century, the term "international" has been irreversibly tainted by politics, and its obvious ideological connotations have led to the substitution of "global" for "international" and "local" for "racial" or "folk," and even to the creation and spread of the portmanteau "glocal." However, despite substantial differences in the state of the world, one can perhaps argue that the situation in 1960 and that in 2008, and particularly critics and scholars' conceptual maneuvers in response to that situation, are not so different after all.

The proceedings of the Second Session, "Modern Art as an Outcome and Expression of Diverse National Traditions and Tendencies," were virtually unchanged from those of the first. Sweeney delivered a short address and the Session Chair, Giulio Carlo Argan, started the discussion. He shares Lassaigue's fondness for quotes, this time quoting from Michel Ragon: "Michel Ragon said as follows. 'Modern art is simultaneously unified and diverse. It is a phenomenon of internationalization, and at the same time a phenomenon almost folkloric in nature. The academic paintings of the late 19th century, whether created in New York, Moscow, Paris or Rome, were invariably the same type of scenes painted in the same way. In contrast, Cubism is firmly rooted in Paris, while Futurism is inseparable from Italy and Expressionism from Germany.'"¹⁴

The speakers who followed had again been decided on beforehand: Haim Gamzou, Hans Jaffé, Juliusz Starzyński, Grgo Gamulin, Magdolna Bényi-Supka, Fuat Pekin, Katarina Ambrozič, Anne Buffinga, Jacek Woźniakowski, and René de Solier. In relation to the reconciliation of the international with the popular, Gamzou states that it is impossible for literature to become a universal language, but such a potential resides in the language of form. Referring to Hans Jaffé, he points out that De Stijl was both a popular and an international movement at the same time, thus enabling it to be universal. He also brings up the topic of Jewish tradition. The next speaker was Jaffé, who touches on the De Stijl movement's pursuit of universality, followed by Starzyński, who cites Polish artists such as Chopin, Wyspiański, and Makowski in his comments. Subsequent spe-

akers make similar remarks, citing their own countries' artists or movements such as functionalist architecture.

What is striking is the frequency with which these speakers quote or refer to each other, placing terms of camaraderie such as "comrade" or "colleague" (*confrère*) before their names: "our friend Jaffé" (Gamzou), "our comrade Władysława Jaworska," "our comrade Grgo Gamulin," "my fellow comrades" (Starzyński), "our comrade Georges Pillement," "our comrade Waldemar George" (Grgo Gamulin), "our friend Restany" (de Solier), "our colleague Pedrosa" (Mário Barata), and so on. In other words, the dialogue at this Congress did not involve differing opinions and their dialectical engagement, nor did it encourage divisive debate. Instead, the Congress favored a style in which like-minded representatives of various countries affirmed and corroborated foregone conclusions which had been prepared and laid out before the Congress began, enriching the discussion with the diversity of their respective nations and strengthening their comradesly bond in the process.

The Third Session, "Modern Art and the Perspectives of Development of Art of Different Peoples," followed basically the same course. The Session Chair was Hans Jaffé, and the speakers were, in order: Eva Tea, Jerzy Sołtan, René de Solier, Nóra Aradi, Mora Zontscheva, Jean-Clarence Lambert, Mário Pedrosa, Irène Brin, Mário Barata, Pablo Fernández Márquez, Magda van Emde Boas, Janusz Bogucki, and Jacques Lassaigue.

As in previous sessions, various countries' artists and phenomena were cited as illustrative examples by the speakers. Eva Tea's remarks were unusual in that they included a quote from a letter sent from Japan. Tea does not reveal the identity of the sender, saying simply that it is a letter from "three young people representing an association of six groups in the Japanese capital" to students of the Fine Arts Academy in Milan. Mário Pedrosa also quotes from the Japanese art journal *Bokubi*.¹⁵ In other words, the discussion of internationalism did to some extent take areas other than the West into consideration. However, looking at the members who actually took part in the Congress, the only participants from outside old Europe and North America were Yusuke Nakahara, the lone Japanese representative, along with three participants from Brazil, one from Mexico, and one from Turkey. It can thus be said that in the minds of most of the participants, the scope of the "internationalism" at issue was limited to Europe and North America, and countries in their sphere of geography or influence.

¹⁴ AICA VIIe Congrès (1960: 41).

¹⁵ AICA VIIe Congrès (1960: 90, 112).

In addition to the above references to Japan, participants in the Third Session took various approaches to discussing the internationalization of art. Irène Brin mentions Hitler’s “degenerate art” policy, while Janusz Bogucki uses the term “ubiquity” (ubiquité) to refer to modern art.¹⁶ In the session’s closing remarks, Jaffé cites the Holy Alliance, a coalition joined by most European monarchs, which was created at the urging of Tsar Alexander I of Russia in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars. Jaffé goes on to state that the circumstances of that time are similar to those of “the present day.” In the context of 1960, he is most likely referring to the need to restore the world order disrupted by the Nazis, not through an alliance of nations but through a “sovereign coalition.” Jaffé then discusses the French Revolution, also mentioned by Starzyński, and its tripartite motto of “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” focusing on “fraternity” (*fraternité*) in particular. He closes his remarks with a quote from the correspondence of Vincent van Gogh: “the more I think, the more I feel that there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people.”¹⁷

In this atmosphere, it is easy to see why Germany kept a low profile at the Congress. There were only two German participants, Will Grohmann and Gert Schiff, and while Grohmann was a session panelist, there is not a single comment by him on record. Even the German newspaper *Die Welt* reported, “Professor Will Grohmann was in attendance [...] but regrettably, he did not utter a single word,”¹⁸ so Grohmann’s silence would appear to be a matter of fact. In the midst of the above characterizations of the Congress as an inauguration of a new “Holy Alliance,” may he have felt cowed into silence as a representative of the “main offender” in the disruption of the world order?

After the close of Jaffé’s remarks, Sweeney took over as chair and introduced Haim Gamzou. As the appointed host of the next International Congress, scheduled to be held in Tel Aviv, Gamzou commented on his impressions of the Warsaw Congress as a whole. Next, Starzyński delivered his final remarks as host, and the Congress ended with an address by Sweeney. As President, Sweeney spoke frequently throughout the Congress, but the other American participants, Dore Ashton and Peter Selz, have no comments on record. Though Sweeney himself was a formidable presence at all times, it can be said that apart from the host country Poland, it was France that maintained the highest profile at the Congress.

Though the Congress offers glimpses of this national balance of power, the widely varying comments of participants throughout the event nevertheless share a common conviction, best expressed by Mário Barata: “The internationalization of art embodies a certain resolve, and it embodies destiny.”¹⁹ As we have seen, the Warsaw Congress served the purpose of a collective performance in which this common conviction was mutually affirmed and accepted as the established view.

Newspaper Commentaries

Polish newspapers and magazines gave the Congress prominent coverage before, during and after the event. Many of the commentaries were written by organizers and participants, including Władysława Jaworska, Secretary of the Polish Section and a well-known scholar of the Pont-Aven School, and Janusz Bogucki. French and German newspapers and periodicals such as *Die Welt* and *Les Lettres Françaises* also provided coverage. By and large, these articles presented the Congress in a favorable light, but the event did not escape criticism in some commentaries. There is evidence that American newspaper reporters were in attendance as well, so one can assume that articles also appeared in the American media. One can surmise, then, that at least newspapers in the participants’ home countries, including Germany and France, provided coverage of the Congress.²⁰

Below, I would like to introduce excerpts from articles whose content was somewhat critical in nature. In order, the excerpts are from Krakow’s “Tygodnik Powszechny”, Germany’s “Die Welt”, and “Frankfurter Allgemeine”, also a German newspaper.

“Debate for debate’s sake. When all is said and done, the Congress yielded no new insights. The exchange of opinions

¹⁹ *AICA VIIe Congrès* (1960: 118).

²⁰ Articles from various Polish newspapers and French publications are listed below. The final article by Lassaigue is not about the AICA per se, but I have included it as its content reflects the aftermath of the Polish Congress. See Footnotes 22 and 23 in regard to German articles. It goes without saying that this is not an all-inclusive list of articles related to the Congress. American articles on the event have yet to be confirmed, but the AICA-P contains documentary evidence such as a letter of inquiry from a Los Angeles Times reporter.

Życie Warszawy (1960); *eg* (1960); *Kr.Zb.* (1960); *Jaworska* (1960); *Garztecka* (1960); *ks* (1960); *Oseka* (1960); *Klaczyński* (1960); *Bogucki* (1960); *Spadowska* (1960); *JW* (1960); *Sztekker* (1960); *D.W.* (1960); *Stajuda* (1960); *Ledóchowski* (1960); *z.j.koz.* (1960); *Rollin* (1960); *Lassaigue* (1960).

¹⁶ *AICA VIIe Congrès* (1960: 118, 129).

¹⁷ *AICA VIIe Congrès* (1960: 133).

¹⁸ *Zimmerer* (1960).

did, however, facilitate the crystallization of the obvious issues at hand. More than likely, these self-evident issues met with the approval of the majority of the participants.”²¹

“This year’s Congress of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), an affiliated organization of UNESCO, was the seventh of its kind. It was held in Warsaw, beneath the peaceful, blandly reassuring banner of mutual coexistence. [...] The level of debate left room for improvement. This collective show of harmony, devoid of intellectual argument, was as bland as watery soup.”²²

“All manner of things were discussed in Warsaw, but there was little new in the views expressed. Mind you, the performance was expertly cast: AICA President and former Guggenheim Museum Director J.J. Sweeney of New York, art history professor Giulio Carlo Argan of Rome, Hans Jaffé of Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum, Jacques Lassaigne of Paris, and many more.”²³

From these articles, it is clear that the aforementioned character of this Congress as a sort of “collective performance” was glaringly apparent to those in attendance. However, none of the commentaries were so critical as to question the point of the Congress outright.

A Written Refusal to Attend – the Correspondence between Starzyński and Pierre Francastel

Even when an occasion is proclaiming peaceful coexistence on its surface, there are struggles going on behind the scenes. These hitches are inevitable when one tries to put a good face on a complicated situation. As I have already mentioned, France was conspicuous in its conduct throughout the occasion, and these activities extended to outside the Congress venue. Though it is not listed in the official program, the French Embassy in Poland held a cocktail party while the Congress was in session on the night of September 9, the day of the Second Session. Exactly who attended is unclear, but this party is the sole event during the Congress that a nation other than Poland

had a hand in organizing. Innocent as this may seem, it also offers a glimpse of the friction between the French contingent and Sweeney, who succeeded the first President of the AICA, Paul Fierens (a French researcher of Belgian art history), as head of the organization. Since many of those directly involved are no longer with us, it is impossible to completely verify the particulars of what happened behind the scenes, but I would like to introduce one documentary source that conveys the situation to some extent.

The AICA archives of the AICA Polish Section in Warsaw contain a great number of fascinating documentary materials, but it was the correspondence between Starzyński and Pierre Francastel that I found to be of particular interest to my research. As was previously mentioned, Starzyński specialized in the research of French Romanticism, and naturally had close ties to a number of French scholars. Starzyński invited Pierre Francastel, a professor of the sociology of art at the Sorbonne, to attend the Polish Congress as a leading participant, but Francastel declined the invitation. In Francastel’s correspondence with Starzyński, who wanted him to attend by all means, one can catch glimpses of the goings-on behind the scenes of the AICA Congress in Poland. Excerpts from the correspondence are introduced below.

Francastel to Starzyński, dated February 6, 1960: “In Brussels, I expressed my objections in regard to members’ freedom to take part in the New York meeting. What is clear from Sweeney’s response is that he has no intention of making efforts for everyone to participate. If you ask me, the fact that you, Jaffé and one other member (?) were excluded shows that there is a problem with the President. The same goes for Brazil’s absence. The AICA is clearly turning into a propaganda committee for the Guggenheim. I am not a Congress member, but if need be I am prepared to clearly and forcefully point out the issues confronting the First Working Session”.

It goes without saying that the President “there is a problem with” is none other than Sweeney. The “New York meeting” Francastel refers to is the AICA General Assembly held in New York in 1959.

Starzyński to Francastel, dated March 5: “I am in complete agreement with what you say in your letter about the political side of the issues. However, I do think we may be able to accomplish something during the Congress if the French, Polish and Dutch Sections, along with members of the other Sections, work together in close cooperation. What is important, and this task depends on us, is that we imbue the Congress itself, as

²¹ JW (1960): “Dyskusje jak dyskusje: w czasie kongresów nie zdarzają się na ogół rewelacje, ale wymiana zdań pomaga w krystalizacji pewnych problemów. Chyba większość uczestników Kongresu zgadzała się na rzeczy oczywiste.”

²² Zimmerer (1960).

²³ Grohmann (1960).

well as our Sections' [the French and Polish Sections'] activities outside of it, with what can be called a distinctly French and Polish character".

Francastel to Starzyński, dated March 22: "After giving the matter careful consideration and discussing it with Gille-Delafon and others, I remain unconvinced that it would be appropriate for me to do so [attend the Warsaw Congress]."

Today, there can be no doubt that contemporary art is on the brink of crisis, both from within and in respect to its surroundings. In these circumstances, is it possible to create a venue for discussion that sets a single standard, to achieve any sort of integration of ideas, to employ learning as a measure for balanced arbitration, or, more precisely, to adopt one specific stance? I do not believe that it is. The fate of painting is in the hands of the artists on the one hand, and lies with society on the other. It is inconceivable that we could come across a transcendental, "historical" viewpoint anticipating that which can only be decided by future events. Consequently, it seems to me that it would be far preferable to allow a far-reaching, truly open discussion to unfold freely of its own accord. If there are people who adopt a rigid stance, then it will diminish and dilute the stances of others. If I were to deliver a report just for the sake of the integral whole, to direct the discussion along a predetermined course, then I fear that it would trigger antagonistic impulses in me of the most violent and futile sort. Would not the AICA be better off as an open forum for representatives of various countries to introduce the multiple tendencies and [one word indecipherable] in art today, in as broad a manner as possible? Could the best resolution not come from the members of one delegation – the French one, for instance – delivering statements which are in complete opposition to one another? Each respective viewpoint of the group should be expressed clearly and forcefully. Whether some prevailing view can be formed, whether the potential can be found for arguments to converge into a clear-cut point of issue, should depend not on mediatory views but on free discussion conducted on the spot."

Gille-Delafon to Starzyński, dated March 25: "The other day, I met for a short time with President Sweeney and various members of the Association. We agreed that the Congress should be a true conference of art critics, and art critics only. We need to keep out people who have nothing to offer the Congress, particularly those who have no reason for attending other than the money in their pockets. [...] During President Sweeney's recent stay in Paris, we perused the Congress pro-

gram together, and the President expressed his admiration for each and every one of your proposals. [...] (Again, Mr. Sweeney voiced his sincere regrets that you had been unable to attend the General Assembly in New York). [...]"

I had a long talk with Mr. Pierre Francastel the other day. I believe that he has written you a letter to the effect that he will probably not be able to take part in the Congress. He believes his position to be more delicate than that of other AICA members, and in his judgment it would be inappropriate in the first place for him to try to sum up discussion at the Congress into some sort of unified whole. He may indeed have a point. In addition, he thinks that it is undesirable for the AICA to adopt any sort of position on the level of art in general, and that in light of the occasion it would be short-sighted and ill-advised to do so. He believes that it is proper, and indeed would be more interesting and productive, to limit the work of the Congress to analysis of the situation."

Starzyński to Francastel, dated April 1: "Secondly, let me say that I am in complete agreement with you and your argument concerning the character of the Congress. I have no desire to sum up contemporary art en masse when it is very much a work in progress, or to orchestrate some sort of model discussion on the theme. I believe that this would be futile and ill-advised, just as you do. What is important is to pose pertinent questions and discuss them as openly and broadly as is possible at this point in time. The act of presenting various tendencies in contemporary art and confronting various conflicting viewpoints should give us some sense of direction on how to address the question of whether there is indeed a crisis in contemporary art, and if so, just how serious it is. It is not my intention to formulate and enforce some kind of historical viewpoint on the subject. That being said, I do believe that if a great many specialists in the field were to express their respective views on the same theme at the same occasion, then that occasion has the potential to become an 'historic' moment in itself. [...] This may be too much to ask, but if you will not grace the Congress with your presence, I would very much appreciate it if you could at least send me a manuscript of your remarks."

In addition to the archives of the AICA Polish Section, the Starzyński Archive of the PAN Institute of Art's special collection also contains a letter from Francastel to Starzyński. It was written in May and is a continuation of the correspondence above.

Francastel to Starzyński: "It appears less likely than ever that I will be able to go to Poland in September to attend the

AICA Congress. The world of painting here is in the throes of crisis, and what is more, I believe that I would be completely at odds with the AICA circle. [...] On the contrary, the basis for discussion should not be subjective opinions, but the objective analysis of the situation and works of art. Unfortunately, the framework of the Congress and the character of the President are irreconcilable with this aim.”

Let us summarize the above correspondence. It may be somewhat insufficient to the task of accurately ascertaining the situation in its entirety, but the following facts are clear. Starzyński hoped to invite Francastel, a friendly acquaintance and a specialist in the study of art in society, to the Congress as a main speaker, but apparently Francastel disapproved both of the AICA's position and of its President, Sweeney. Starzyński's persistent requests prompted Francastel to state his misgivings quite frankly in his replies. In short, Francastel did not share the critics' stance of seeking to validate a specific artistic tendency and elevate it to a historical platform for posterity. By adopting a position in favor of more “objective” analysis of social circumstances and artworks, and research placing multiple phenomena in relative perspective while keeping them at an impartial distance, Francastel effectively drew a line between his own activities and those of the critics. In the end, Starzyński's pleas went unheeded, and Francastel did not even submit a manuscript of his remarks. This is not to say that Francastel was not on good terms with Starzyński, or that he lacked interest in Poland. On the contrary, the two men's close ties are evident from the content of their correspondence, and Francastel informs Starzyński of his intentions to go to Warsaw “in complete freedom and outside the framework of the AICA” in October, the month after the AICA Congress, to hold a conference and speak there.

Conclusion

Summing up the Congress Report compiled by the AICA, the contents of the survey, newspaper commentaries, and the various reactions and voices of discord emanating from around the Congress and behind the scenes, the significance of the Congress can be assessed as follows. The event sought to acknowledge modern art as a global principle and a common international language, while simultaneously ensuring its peaceful coexistence with the “individuality” of various peoples, races and artists. In other words, it served to affirm a concept

of modern art as a spontaneous product of individuality, possessed at the same time of an international and universal character. As previously stated, this “individuality” has virtually no political connotations of the nation state. Institutional concerns of state were toned down as much as possible in the determination to create a scenario in which individuality was linked to universal principles.

When one considers the fact that the AICA was established by UNESCO, however, one can say that the broad outline of this conceptual outlook was preordained from the moment of the organization's founding. Both UNESCO and the AICA were born of the United Nations' activities to restore and maintain world peace and order after the Second World War, as is evident in this passage from the preamble of the UNESCO Constitution: “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” In light of the organization's beginnings, it is natural that the AICA stayed the course of postwar policy to appease interstate conflict, and that the proceedings of the AICA Polish Congress beneath the “banner of mutual coexistence” failed to yield any substantial debate. This Congress was fundamentally unsuited to becoming a venue for real discussion, and thus the occasion took on the tone of a UNESCO-style political performance.

The Eighth AICA International Congress, held in Tel Aviv in 1963, was in part a thematic continuation of the previous Congress' espousal of internationalism in art. The two themes of the Tel Aviv Congress were “Jewish Thought as a Universal Factor in Art” and “Artistic Creation in Modern Technology: Conflict and Integration.” Thematically similar congresses have also been held by the CIHA, including the 1958 Paris International Congress with its theme of “Artistic Relations between France and Other Countries from the Middle Ages to the End of the 19th Century,” the 1986 Washington International Congress with its theme of “World Art, Themes of Unity in Diversity,” and most recently the 2008 Melbourne International Congress with its theme of “Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, Convergence.” The CIHA Congress held in Stockholm in 1933, the year the Nazis first gained power, displayed strong nationalist tendencies, and traces of these were still evident at the 1958 Paris Congress. However, these tendencies began to subside from around 1960, when the AICA International Congress was held in Poland.²⁴ In the half-century since then, the term “interna-

²⁴ The following is a list of documentary materials on the subject of the congresses mentioned in this passage. Except for the report on the Washington Congress, these reports have no ISBN code.

tionalism” has come to be replaced by “globalization,” and the geography of art has taken on different aspects. These major currents in thinking have surely had both a direct and indirect effect, not only on the political activities of international organizations such as UNESCO, the CIHA and the AICA, but also on historical accounts of art, art criticism, and the various artistic endeavors which coincide with them. The time has now come to embark on a thorough examination of the “globalization” of art. May this study serve as one such example.

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