

# Art and Globalization

## SU Art Museum Teaching Guide



Elizabeth Wimer  
Assistant Teaching Professor, Martin J. Whitman School of Management

Samuel Santiago  
PhD Candidate, Department of English, College of Arts and Science

Kate Holohan, PhD  
Curator of Education and Academic Outreach, Syracuse University Art Museum

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, Global Economy, Capitalism,  
Emerging Economies, Infrastructure, Culture

## Introducing Art and Globalization

Globalization refers to the interconnectedness and interdependence of each and every economy, culture and population around the world. The advancements and increasing interconnection of nations in trade, technology, and communication has led to the integration of markets and the blending of cultural practices across the globe. A useful framework for understanding the impact of globalization in broad perspective is the Brandt Line, which divides the world into the "global North" and "global South," reflecting historical and economic disparities between more developed and less developed regions. This division highlights the uneven benefits of globalization, where wealth and opportunities are concentrated in the North while the South faces greater challenges in economic development. Understanding globalization and the Brandt Line matters to everyone because it underscores the complexities of economic and social inequalities, influences international policies, and affects how individuals and nations navigate their roles within an increasingly interconnected world.

Despite the centrality of globalization, the effects of this phenomenon on culture and community in the Global South is often overlooked. The visual arts—and, specifically, artists—provide opportunities to think about the intersections of global influence and culture. Through curiosity and careful observation, we can find new meanings in photographs, screen printing, paintings and more.



Ed Kashi, *OKRIKA, NIGERIA* | 2004, 2004, printed 2022, SUAM 2022.0018

Consider Ed Kashi's photograph of Okrika, Nigeria, taken in the Global South. Globalization is represented in several aspects of the picture, most notably the presence of Shell Corporation. Before studying the artwork further it is helpful to understand the context of this multinational business. Shell, a global energy giant, exemplifies the impact of globalization through its extensive operations and supply chains that span multiple continents, facilitating the international exchange of resources and technology. As a major player in the oil and gas industry, Shell's activities

reflect the intertwined nature of global markets and economies, influencing everything from local economies to international energy policies. The company's global presence underscores the complexities of globalization, including the challenges of managing environmental and social impacts as well as diverse regulatory landscapes across the world.

In this photo Shell Corporation is literally moving through the country of Nigeria, using pipelines to transport a resource, natural gas or oil, under the feet of a passing child—a child who, in a moment of perfect coincidence, is carrying a Shell-branded umbrella. The child is a literal bright spot in the center of the image, and at the center of our attention. She crosses pipelines that curve away out of the frame amidst proliferating power lines, signage, and makeshift structures. The vegetation that this infrastructure displaces nonetheless continues to burst forth, with grass, trees, and vines growing between and among the pipelines and buildings. If we consider this artwork as

a critique of rapid urbanization and development associated with globalization, what might that lead us to learn about displacement, gentrification, and the loss of cultural heritage?

Ed Kashi's photograph captures the stark realities of economic disparity and environmental degradation in a globalized world. The image highlights the contrast between the region's local conditions and the broader global economic systems that influence them. In particular, Kashi's work reflects how multinational corporations' activities, particularly in the oil industry, have impacted local communities in Nigeria, contributing to environmental pollution and socio-economic challenges. By focusing on these issues, Kashi's photo emphasizes the uneven benefits of globalization and the often overlooked human and environmental costs associated with the global economy.

This is one example of many that Kashi, a New Jersey-based photographer and filmmaker, has brought to bear through his art. Kashi describes his motivations as photojournalistic, noting on his [website](#) that “I deeply believe in the power of still images to change people’s minds.” Throughout his extensive and storied career, he has often captured subjects of global sociopolitical consequence, as in his film *Too Hot to Work* and related photographs published by *Time* magazine. In this work, Kashi examined the dangerous labor conditions experienced by World Cup stadium construction workers in Qatar in 2022. Likewise, Kashi captured the human and environmental costs of oil extraction in the Niger Delta for a *National Geographic* photo series that was later published as the book *Curse of the Black Gold*. Alongside his career success in mainstream magazines, Kashi has produced several books that are available through various retailers and through his own website. He is also represented by the Monroe Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which manages sales of his photographic prints. His fame makes him a desirable guest speaker and workshop host for universities and art programs, both within and beyond the U.S. In interviews, Kashi often speaks to the intensity of photojournalistic work, both regarding the physical dangers of seeking out moments of crisis, and the mental toll of becoming involved in said scenarios as an observer who ultimately leaves.

Ed Kashi is an apt example for the study of globalization; his work directly documents the effects of global industries, such as oil and mining, on local communities. Kashi captures the environmental degradation and social disruption caused by global activities. For example, his photographs of oil pollution in Nigeria highlight the environmental costs of global energy demands and the resulting health and economic issues faced by local populations.

## Approaches to Observing & Discussing Art

Visual analysis is the foundational practice of the field of art history. Before investigating historic contexts, exploring cultural relevance, or doing biographical research on artists, it's best to begin thinking about a work of art with straightforward questions about its visual qualities, focusing on the art object itself and approaching it on its own terms.

Asa Simon Mittman's open access online textbook *Look At This!: An Introduction to Art Appreciation* provides guidelines for visual analysis as a two-step process: analyzing the [constitutive elements](#) of an artwork, and then considering how the [artwork's composition](#) brings those elements together. Mittman first suggests focusing on the following visual elements of an artwork:



1. **Line:** A path either represented or implied
2. **Shape:** The property of a two-dimensional form, usually defined by a line around it
3. **Color:** The light reflecting off objects, divided into hue, value and intensity
4. **Space:** Depth, real or represented, as well as the general area within a work
5. **Form:** The property of a three-dimensional object
6. **Texture:** The feeling of a surface, real or represented

During initial observations, consider how each element appears in the artwork. For example, are lines rigid or curved, narrow or thick? Are colors abundant, varied, and saturated, or muted and restrained? Does the space of the artwork appear vast or confined? Do these qualities appear in one way consistently throughout the artwork, or do they change from area to area? During this initial stage of visual analysis, keep focus on each element in as much isolation as possible to gain an understanding of how the artwork's individual components operate. For an example, we'll look at Nisha Jha's *Climate Change* (pictured above).



Nisha Jha, *Climate Change*, 2016, SUAM 2023.383

**Line:** The lines throughout *Climate Change* have organic qualities and are often curving, wavy, and intertwined. Lines throughout the painting, whether depicting crowds of people, tree bark, or the border, are densely packed.

**Shape:** Divided into fourths, the painting is composed of four rectangles bordered by a frame of checkered dome-like shapes interspersed with branches of leaves. The abundance of squares and circles throughout the image are consistent in shape and size, but lack perfect symmetry, often overlapping with other shapes.

**Color:** Jha paints black lines on white paper, accenting the image with reds that pop out because of the otherwise muted color palette. The lighter, pinkish red draws the eyes toward details in clothing and plant matter, while the darkest shades of red are reserved for Jha's depiction of atmospheric heating.

**Space:** *Climate Change* flattens its three-dimensional spaces into a two-dimensional style that conveys a sense of "up and down" more so than "forward and back." While some objects appear behind others, they all appear equally detailed and in focus, as if they are all in the foreground.

**Form:** The painting gestures toward three dimensionality with some elements, like the curve of the globe and angular corners of vehicles on the road, but also flattens other elements, like building and people, into two dimensions.

**Texture:** Despite being a painting, the densely packed image appears tapestry-like, evoking feelings of textiles rather than of paper. The many overlapping shapes and abundance of organic matter evoke a varied and uneven texture.

After becoming familiar with the visual elements of an artwork, turn your attention to how those elements operate together to form a complete work. How do the various elements function together to create a sense of balance (or imbalance) or of pattern and rhythm? Do they evoke a feeling of movement? How do they relate to each other in terms of proportion and scale? What kind of emotional responses does the artwork prompt?

Regarding Jha's *Climate Change*, the four-way division of the image, depicting people, urban environments, and the globe, creates a sense of scale that encourages viewers to consider the interrelation between small elements and large ecological systems. The overall flatness of the image unifies its variety of subject matter, and the density of shapes and abundance of lines entangles those subjects. While clear borders frame the image, there's a prevailing sense of togetherness that can be understood as a metaphor for how the climate functions.

From here, adopting other contextual or disciplinary lenses can further focus your analysis and expand your discussion of the art. For example, you might ask who made the artwork and why, how it was made and what it is made of, how a particular form of scholarship may shape your interpretation of the art, how it reflects a particular historical moment, or how it communicates a set of cultural values.

Below are several approaches accompanied by suggested groupings of artworks from the museum's collection that can help you explore ideas around art and globalization. You'll also find questions to help focus your engagement and discussion. The suggested groupings are only starting points; you are encouraged to further explore artists and artworks you find especially conducive to discussion or relevant to your teaching.

## Globalization

Globalization is the process of making the world more connected by increasing the flow of goods, ideas, and people across borders. It is driven by advancements in technology and communication, making it easier for businesses, cultures, and governments to interact and influence each other. While globalization can boost economic growth and cultural exchange, it can also create challenges like inequality and environmental issues. Essentially, it means that what happens in one part of the world can have effects everywhere else.

Returning to Ed Kashi's work, we can observe how his photographs reflect the disparities between wealthy, industrialized nations and less developed regions, between global wealth and local poverty. His work sheds light on the uneven distribution of globalization's benefits. In his



Ed Kashi, *CHICHIGALPA, NICARAGUA* | 2014, 2024, printed 2022, SUAM 2022.0023

photograph from Chichigalpa, Nicaragua, Kashi places his camera above and behind a shirtless, dirt-caked worker who is using a machete to cut sugarcane. As viewers, we are following the worker in the field, experiencing his work with him; yet we are also somewhat removed, positioned above him, rather than on the ground. We get a visceral sense of the impact of sugarcane harvesting on the worker's body. Indeed, this photograph is part of a series Kashi made focusing on the prevalence of Chronic Kidney Disease of Unknown Causes among agricultural workers in hot and wet climates. While this photograph

focuses on a single worker, we can imagine others in the fields, all toiling to harvest a commodity (sugarcane) that is fueled by a global demand for sugar. The physically taxing labor and negative health impacts are experienced by the workers in Chichigalpa, while the benefits accrue to the unseen corporations that process, package, and market the end product. Kashi's centering of individual experience helps us to consider global issues such as migration, economic inequality, and environmental challenges on a human scale, and emphasizes the interconnectedness of global and local experiences.

As you look further at Kashi's work, or any of the artworks suggested below, consider the following questions.

- How does the artwork reflect or address the impact of global trade, multinational corporations, or economic inequality? Think about the subject matter, medium (photograph, painting, sculpture, etc.), and the key elements of art (line, shape, color, etc.).
- Are there aspects of the artwork that illustrate the blending or clash of different cultures? Look for signs of cultural fusion, appropriation, or conflict, and think about how the artwork shows the exchange or tension between local traditions and global influences.
- In what ways does this artwork capture the human or environmental effects of globalization?
- How does this work of art critique the rapid urbanization and development associated with globalization? Do you see the artist exploring themes like displacement, gentrification, and the loss of cultural heritage?

### Suggested Artwork

- Unidentified artist, *Yokohama city center*, circa 1890, SUAM [1988.629](#)
- Dong Kingman, *[Dock scene]*, 1944, SUAM [1966.413](#)
- Paul Almásy, *Woman in supermarket (likely Kenya)*, 1959, SUAM [2021.0333](#)
- Richard Florsheim, *Offshore Rig*, 1975, SUAM [1977.124](#)

- Mark Steinmetz, *Athens, GA*, 1997, SUAM [2023.265](#)
- Brandon Stahlman, *Long Distance*, 2007, SUAM [2008.0008.23](#)
- Kanchan Jha, *Frontline Corona Warrior*, 2020, SUAM [2021.0001](#)

## Climate

Climate change and globalization are deeply intertwined, as the increased movement of goods and people accelerates environmental degradation and carbon emissions. Globalization can amplify climate impacts by spreading industrial activities and consumption patterns across the planet.

Consider the following as you look at the works below, or others, that engage with climate themes.

- How does this work of art visualize a specific climate or environment? Does it also visually refer to or depict the effects of climate change?
- Does the artist depict these effects directly? Do they do so by using symbolic imagery? Both?
- Do you see the artist advocating for environmental action and sustainability?
- After engaging with the artwork, do you as a viewer reconsider your role in a global ecological crisis and/or feel a call to action personally? If so or if not, why?



Berenice Abbott, *Miner, Ethel, W. Va.*, 1935, SUAM 1981.2312

## Suggested Artwork

- Felix Ziem, *[View of Venice]*, circa 1890, SUAM [0040.054](#)
- Underwood & Underwood, *On the Nile, the life stream of Egypt*, 1904, SUAM [1991.370](#)
- Berenice Abbott, *Miner, Ethel, W. Va.*, 1935, SUAM [1981.2312](#)
- William Garnett, *Lake Powell, Arizona/Utah.*, 1967, printed 1983, SUAM [1984.819](#)
- Ed Kashi, *AFIESERE, NIGERIA | 2004*, 2004, printed 2022, SUAM [2022.0020](#)
- Nisha Jha, *Climate Change*, 2016, SUAM [2023.383](#)
- Brandon Lazore, *Gaya•neñ•hsä•'gó•neh*, 2021, SUAM [2022.0004](#)

## Healthcare

Globalization has expanded access to healthcare innovations and technologies, allowing for more widespread and efficient treatment options across the globe. However, it has also led to disparities in healthcare access, with high-income countries often benefiting more than low-income regions. The interconnectedness fostered by globalization can drive collaborative efforts to address global health challenges, such as pandemics, and promote equitable healthcare advancements.





Shalinee Kumari, *Mother Nature in Covid time*, 2020, SUAM 2023.2

As you look at the artworks listed below, you might ask the following questions.

- How does this artwork attest to disparities in global healthcare access and quality?
- Do you see the artist depicting or alluding to struggles of underserved communities and the impact of healthcare inequalities?
- Does your engagement with this artwork make you more interested in studying or discussing global health policies? Why or why not?

### Suggested Artwork

- Boris Artzybasheff, *LIFE Map – Tropical Diseases*, 1944, SUAM [1965.1115](#)
- Berenice Abbott, [Man standing in the middle of the street holding a sign that says Polio Drive], 1954, SUAM [1981.2532](#)
- Paul Almásy, *Immigration from Mexico to the USA*, 1961, SUAM [2021.0305](#)
- Jason Eskenazi, *Maternity Hospital, Azerbaijan*, 1999, SUAM [2023.367](#)
- Ed Kashi, *GLADESVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA | 2000*, 2000, printed 2022, SUAM [2022.0016](#)
- Ed Kashi, *RAJANGANAYA, SRI LANKA | 2016*, 2016, printed 2022, SUAM [2022.0025](#)
- Shalinee Kumari, *Mother Nature in Covid time*, 2020, SUAM [2023.2](#)



## Additional Resources

### Further Reading

- **Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer.** “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.” 1944. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, edited by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, translated by Edmund Jephcott, Stanford University Press, 2002, pp. 94–136. Contributing to the discourse ignited by Benjamin’s “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Adorno and Horkheimer’s essay targets global capitalism as a system that incentivizes artlessness, favoring utility, giving examples ranging from urban planning to film and radio.
- **Benjamin, Walter.** “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” 1935. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt, Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 217–252. In this foundational essay for art criticism within economic contexts, Benjamin laments capitalism’s effects upon various art forms (particularly film), describing mass produced and circulated art commodities as “phony spell[s]” cast upon audiences, rather than genuine aesthetic feats that form meaningful connections.
- **Elkins, James.** *Is Art History Global?* Routledge, 2007. This book contains essays and conference proceedings about Art History as a global discipline, proposing that art historians hold a responsibility to promote global thinking while also confronting the difficulties that arise from such expansive historical approaches.
- **Frigeri, Flavia, and Kristian Handberg, editors.** *New Histories of Art in the Global Postwar Era: Multiple Modernisms*. Routledge, 2021. This reader collects essays that promote a globally oriented approach to the study of art, artists, and museums, particularly regarding the postwar era (1945–1970). The essays address the concept of modernism as a term complicated by global exchange, and with specific relevance to individual nations’ culture and economic status.
- **Groys, Boris.** *Art Power*. MIT Press, 2008. Groys’s book posits that art is a force of global cultural communication, political propaganda, and economic influence. He critiques dominant art discourse as overridden with market interests, and extensively interrogates the relationship between art audiences’ tastes and the markets’ influences over those tastes. He compares artworks produced by totalitarian regimes with more current popular art to elucidate the varied ways in which propaganda can operate.
- **Harris, Jonathan, editor.** *Globalization and Contemporary Art*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. This essay collection explores the effects of contemporary international politics in art across various media forms, questioning how the notion of borders is evolving through their representation in and impact on artwork.
- **Kaufmann, Thomas DaCosta, et al., editors.** *Circulations in the Global History of Art*. Routledge, 2015. Focusing on instances of transcultural encounter and exchange, this essay collection argues for the balanced treatment of artwork across the cultures, places, and times from which art arises globally. The essays prioritize the study of art circulation,

addressing topics ranging from art exchange at national borders to art's distribution through the internet.

## Art History Resources

- **CAMEO (Conservation & Art Materials Encyclopedia Online):** This [online encyclopedia](#) contains a wealth of information on various art materials, as well as how they work and how to handle them.
- ***Look At This!: An Introduction to Art Appreciation*:** This [online textbook](#), written by Asa Simon Mittman, provides an entry-level guide to visual analysis followed by extensive analyses of various artistic traditions.
- **Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History:** This [website](#) provides an extensive timeline of art production across global art cultures as well as well-researched essays.
- **SmartHistory:** This [website](#) provides accessible tools for studying art history, including peer-reviewed lessons written by over 800 contributing scholars.
- **The Getty Research Institute:** The Institute's [research website](#) includes an array of tools and databases covering a range of subject matter including [collecting and provenance research](#), [conservation](#), [art vocabularies](#), and more.
- **Syracuse University Library:** The SU library resources includes [39 databases](#) under the subject of Art, Design, and Photography, offering access to a wide variety of artwork itself alongside critical writing.
  - **ARTstor:** A [vast archive within JSTOR](#) that provides images of artwork
  - **Grove Art Online:** Contains [introductory essays and bibliographies](#) on various art topics, as well as encyclopedic information on key art terms.

## Artwork Illustrated in Guide (in order of appearance)

- Ed Kashi (American, born 1957), *FINIMA, NIGERIA | 2006*, 2006, printed 2022. Archival pigment print, 13 1/4 x 20 in. Gift of the artist, [2022.0021](#)
- Ed Kashi (American, born 1957), *OKRIKA, NIGERIA | 2004*, 2004, printed 2022. Archival pigment print, 13 1/4 x 20 in. Gift of the artist, [2022.0018](#)
- Nisha Jha (Indian, dates unknown), *Climate Change*, 2016. Ink and acrylic, 22 x 29 7/8 in. Gift of Susan S. Wadley, [2023.383](#)
- Ed Kashi (American, born 1957), *CHICHIGALPA, NICARAGUA | 2020*, 2020. Archival pigment print 13 5/16 x 20 in. Gift of the artist, [2022.0023](#)
- Berenice Abbott (American, 1898-1991), *Miner, Ethel, W. Va.*, 1935, Gelatin silver print, 7 15/16 x 9 5/8 in. Gift of Emanuel Azenberg, [1981.2312](#)
- Shalinee Kumari, *Mother Nature in Covid time*, 2020, Ink and acrylic, 22 x 30 in. Gift of Susan S. Wadley, [2023.2](#)