

Introducion

It is impossible to discuss cultural questions nowadays without taking into account the global political situation. I am absolutely certain that the events of the recent past irrefutably show the extent to which ideologies (and by that I mean economic, religious, cultural and political ideologies) have ousted the categories of origin and personal background. There is obviously nothing completely new about this development. However, this constellation has taken on a new aspect: many people all around the world no longer accept the dominance of western culture and are expressing their resistance in hitherto unheard-of ways. For this reason alone, it has now become more necessary than ever to initiate communication processes and promote a broader understanding of the way cultures outside Europe perceive things. I don't want to fall into the trap of naïve idealism and claim that a project like *transonic* or the work of the House of World Cultures alone can solve deeply rooted political and cultural conflicts. At the same time, however, I remain convinced that art can have a very subtle as well as very powerful and long-lasting effect on social processes. Many people consider the concepts of "westernisation" and "globalisation" to be interchangeable. But I can imagine a global culture that isn't based on western consumerism or other ideologies. I am convinced that a certain type of cultural globalisation could have very positive results. The precondition for this would its development as a continual process of exchanges and mutual discovery. What we need are spaces in which culture are free to evolve—spaces in which values, materials, aesthetics and traditions can combine. And we also need spaces that allow us to continue as well as preserve traditional values and cultures.

Gene Coleman