

Luis Camnitzer

Where is the Genie?



I like to use Aladdin's lamp as a simile for what happens in the art world. Artists make their work as they would make lamps: in the hope that the genie is inside. Sometimes they even believe that they can control the presence of the genie. Museums then display the art-equivalents of the lamp, betting, not just hoping, that the genie is in there and will stay there for the foreseeable future. The genie is intangible while the lamps are not, so attention tends to focus on the technical execution of the lamp, hence the emphasis on crafts and finish, or, after Duchamp, on how well they were intellectually framed as objects capable of containing the genie. The genie is in the lamp because museums say so, and the canon is the measuring stick with which they validate their statement.

I was part of a generation of rebellious students that worked toward changing the curricular structure of the art school in Uruguay, reform we unexpectedly succeeded in implementing in 1960. Until then the school had only one art history teacher—a poet—who, year after year, kept repeating his knowledge of Greek and Roman art. For unknown reasons I was the emissary designated to inform him that we didn't want to keep him in our new plan of studies. Surprised, he asked me: "How come?" Trying to soften the

situation I blurted out: “We feel that you reduce art to only two topics: love and death,” which was in fact what he did. Puzzled, he looked at me and asked: “But, is there anything else?”

Nearly six decades later I am still embarrassed about the exchange, for two reasons. The first is that I realize the callousness of a young militant student is not a good aid for communication. Today I would at least have asked him to go out with me and have a cup of coffee together before broaching the subject. The other is that it was a very stupid conversation intellectually. As a subtext, we were discussing what motivates the canon and from where it might derive its judgments. Yet, neither of us had ever thought about what the canon itself is or might be. He had brought the whole topic down to a generality so vague that his course had become useless. And we, the students, felt that his vagueness was even more faulty because it didn't accommodate the contributions of either modernism or the life conditions under which we operated and were supposed to produce. In this we were as schematic as he was and, discrepancies aside, we still agreed with him that it was OK to have one single canon ruling the art of the whole world. Had we discussed politics, we would have shared a staunch anti-imperialism. We just didn't carry our anti-imperialism consistently into cultural activities.

Looking back, I also have to acknowledge that he wasn't completely wrong. Love and death do inform the canon. But they are not all that inform it, and neither do love and death help determine quality. Love and death are words and concepts general enough to help create part of what we may call a “pre-canon” platform that conditions content and may direct empathy. Many canons emerge from it, some for rituals, some for folklore, and some for what we may inelegantly call “educated art.” Rituals and folklore are allowed to take their own directions, but educated art is supposed to be more general, shared and bought by the whole world to the point of achieving one single globalized market.

The task of art schools and art museums is not only to feed into this picture, but also to ensure that the public believes both the declaration about where the genie lives and the canonical values that are served by the declaration of its habitat. This creates a self-sustaining aesthetic that is difficult to challenge and overturn. If the artist challenges too much, the work escapes the operating definition of art and isn't recognized as such. The limits within which a challenge can be successful are therefore very narrow. The artist in the Western art tradition has to show a hint of rupture strong enough to show originality, and weak enough not to preclude acceptance. The word “originality” in capitalist art hints at the presence of the genie, but in fact refers to the work's potential for commercial branding. No matter what, the genie continues to be intangible. We therefore focus on manufacturing lamps in the hope that they will be successful in generating consensus about the genie's presence within them. This consensus, however, is elusive and many people confuse the presence of the genie with the elaboration of the lamps.

All these points, however unclear, touch on values, on ways of knowing, on the image and representation of whole societies. And while a majority of the creators of consumer-spectacles and super-productions would accept that their purpose is to enrich the free time of the public, a majority of visual artists would not. They would claim that they are involved in profound explorations aimed at the transformation of society and that they work for its benefit. They probably would rather have themselves compared to scientists than to entertainers.



I would agree with that: I don't believe that art is entertainment. However, art's spectatorship is generally treated as a leisure activity connected with "free time." In an interview in *La Nación* in Buenos Aires, the billionaire Eduardo Constantini, who owns the Museum of Latin American Art in Buenos Aires (MALBA), discusses the coordination of his museum with the "free time agenda" model posed by the Centre Pompidou, Paris and the Tate Modern, London. He explained that the temporary exhibition plans for his museum include curatorial proposals for "blockbuster level exhibitions like Yayoi Kusama, and also others that are for thinking, like the work of Voluspa Jarpa."¹ Jarpa is a Chilean artist who works with documents related to dictatorships and security agencies, topics that are particularly hot in the recent history of the Southern Cone countries.

The "free time" activities organized by museums are not just timely sources of income. They have generated a whole slew of economic categories and theories around cultural or creative industries. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Latin America has coined a trendy new term, the "Orange Economy," to describe the cultural and creative industries and their impact on national economies. The categorization is so broad that one could take any exclusion from it as an insult. According to the IDB, culture and creativity is an "economy" because, following John Howkins' concept of the "creative economy," it "allows that ideas may be transformed into cultural goods and services with their value determined by the intellectual property it contains." And this economy is orange "because the color has often been associated with culture, creativity and identity."² From a macro-level perspective on creative activities, it is pointed out that in 2011 this Orange Economy produced 4.3 trillion dollars worldwide, two and a half times global military expenditure.³ This approach to thinking about art might appear to

underscore its social significance. In fact, however, the emphasis on art's fiscal impact makes it more difficult to conceive of art as an agent of cultural transformation. A variable market landscape takes the place of the traditional cultural geography.

When the visual arts are subjected to economic analysis, the attention shifts to measurable elements including the profits generated by museums through revenue from the tickets, souvenirs, and restaurants, and the out-of-house profits generated by tourists who come to the city to see art. As a consequence, institutional success is measured by circulation and the income it produces. Inevitably this becomes, more than strategy, part of an institution's ideology and self-image. In the same interview, Constantini also commented (though without nostalgia): "Museums are not any more what they used to be, they are arguments to place cities as a tourist destination, like Bilbao, and they add value." Meanwhile, few artists are able to live off their production, and museum workers earn less than university personnel, which, at least in the US, is already below the salary of police and garbage collectors. Artwork, then, is consumed mostly as entertainment, and both artists and museums are driven to present spectacles instead of fulfilling their true tasks.



None of this is new, of course, but it raises the question of what the true tasks of the artist and museum might be. The answers depend on who is asked and how schematic we want to be when asking. Within my simplified construction, the task of museums is twofold: to accumulate artifacts for future reference for as long as posterity might last, and to present what is presumed to be good. "Good," however, is something imponderable. A curator from a prestigious museum once explained to me in a meeting that the function in his profession was to present "good art." Asked how "good" was determined, he answered: "We do our best." As love and death are not very helpful for this process, "good" becomes an exercise in mixing a validated past with a prediction of the future, and working hard to make this prediction come true. This mixture forces a certain immutability of values and stabilizes the canon, making the task a very conservative one.

In late 2016, the Whitney Museum opened an exhibition of the work of Carmen Herrera (*Carmen Herrera: Lines of Sight*). Since the late 1940s Herrera has been working in a vein of abstraction made famous in the US by Ellsworth Kelly. Her exhibition at the Whitney was her first in a major US museum. Herrera is Cuban and, after a stint in Paris, she lived in the U.S. starting the mid-1950s. At the time of the show's opening she was 101 years old. On the first occasion that her work appeared at the Whitney, earlier the same year, it was placed side-by-side with a work by Kelly. In a review in *The New York Times*, critic

Roberta Smith pointed out: “It’s indicative of what the Whitney Museum is trying to do ...: to pry open the canon and make space for marginalized artists.”⁴ One way of looking at this is that the Whitney was granting a passport into the walled fortress to an immigrant whose work was deserving of recognition because of its affinity with that of a canonical artist already well established within the fortress. In this way, the exhibitions and statements of museums cast an aura of unity over diverse discourses. In the process, the function of art as an agent of cultural transformation in a particular social context is submerged: the application of canonical values to work emerging from different circumstances suggests, instead, that art is a unified casserole serving dish with controlled ingredients.

Traditionally, artists have been identified as “craftspeople plus,” that is, as fabricators of objects with a certain “extra” quality that can’t be clearly identified. Elusive and immaterial, that “plus” is what we are all desperately trying to capture. In doing so, we oscillate between a search for the self, the enlargement of our ego-footprint, survival (both in life and in posterity), the promotion of cultural change, or any mixture of the above. Ultimately, however, it’s an effort to come close to, or to impersonate Aladdin’s “genie.”

The declaration that the genie is in the lamp makes the lamp that much more important. This is reflected by the accepted fact that a perfect replica of the lamp cannot house the genie. Even if no one is able to tell the difference, it is only the original that has value. Paradoxically, the status of being “the original” depends on neither genie nor lamp. It depends on certificates, provenances, and signatures. While restorers may retouch anything on a painting, the original signature may not be touched. We focus, in varying proportions, on craft and virtuosity in execution, and on documentation. Perhaps it’s in an effort to escape from these physical, obscurantist, and conceptual constraints that we introduce issues already explored in other disciplines like history, sociology, and philosophy. It’s not clear, however, whether in doing so we are introducing new meanings or operating redundantly.

These conundrums may have contributed to the drive to dematerialize the work of art during the 1960s, and to movements today such as social practice. During the sixties, much of the search for the genie remained within the confines of the actual work of art. The genie was confused with some version of soul. The idea was that the soul was ultimately inaccessible because it was trapped in the material, and dematerialization would help us get to it.

It turns out that dematerialization didn’t solve the problem. The soul still remained out of reach because there was a conceptual skin enveloping it. However, the push to dematerialize helped by perforating the bubble of the canon enough to let information theory seep into it, forcing us to face the issue of communication.

The canon had to accept that a work of art’s communicative aspects might be more important than the quality of its technical finish and, more crucially, that the genie, hypothetical or real and still undefined, was not to be found in the lamp. This raised at least three questions: “What if there is no soul?” or alternatively, “What if the genie does exist, but somewhere else?” and if so “Where would that be?” If the genie is not in the lamp, a few conclusions follow. The first is that the lamp loses any authoritative control of meaning. The second is that the meaning in the lamp must therefore be understood as the product of interaction with external agencies: on the one hand, the institutions serving the integrity and continuation of the canon; on the other, anonymous actors interacting with the lamp. This last conclusion raises the possibility that agency exists throughout the social fabric, that there is a genie in all of us. If so, the lamp’s function in the world goes well beyond satisfying taste, indoctrinating consumers, and expanding commerce. It extends to serving as a point of departure for the genii in everyone, a stimulus to raising awareness in society and starting new processes.

In this way, we arrive at a much clearer understanding of the pedagogical relation between art and public, and can begin to appreciate the role of the museum as a pedagogical institution. When art institutions see

themselves chiefly as guardians of canonical values, and evaluate their work by reference to criteria of consumption, they are missing the opportunity to do something even more important and powerful: to release untapped creative energy in the public. Instead of serving as a Bureau of Standards, the museum would make decisions based on pedagogical considerations and on what shape education should take. It was the Bureau of Standard's pressure that allowed Mel Bochner, in 2011, to accuse the Museum of Modern Art in New York of being an international terrorist organization.⁵

We should ask ourselves what the Utopia is that we are working for. Is it the Utopia of global consumption? The Utopia of a global market needs objects and/or situations that are more or less unified within a global common denominator. While the idea of globalization implies a geographic capaciousness and inclusiveness, in fact, global common denominators in art reflect the taste and consumption habits of a very small segment of the human race, more or the less the members of the affluent, educated middle-classes who believe in the European-US canon. Local tacit understandings that inform cultures that deviated from the hegemonic canon are relegated to subsidiary status as vernacular. The underlying idea is that art is an international borderless language, and that the direction in all cultures is towards the embrace of this language. In the process, local knowledge undergoes a process of impoverishment and the glue that holds communities together is weakened.

There are other utopias available, ones that strive to improve the world through individual development and the building of communities. Here, the artist defines the pedagogical/communication activity into which the work will fit. Even though crafts may be used to this effect, the activity is primarily about knowledge and not about production of commodities. As early as in the eighteenth century, A. G. Baumgarten wrote in the prolegomena to his *Theoretic Aesthetics*:

The use of aesthetics as art education, one that complements natural aesthetics, consists among other things in: 1. providing the sciences, that rely mostly on rational recognition, with proper materials; 2. fitting to everybody's comprehension whatever is recognized in science; 3. improving recognition beyond the clearly recognizable.⁶

Reading this today, we see that Baumgarten's statements might have even broader implications than he could have foreseen. His first two points may have referred to the use of art as illustration. But, what is more interesting about his comments is their perception of limitations in scientific thinking. Baumgarten was preoccupied with beauty as a filter that helped put order into cognition. However, he was also wary of dismissing confusion, which for him was a kind of petri dish of ideas necessary to achieve any form of order. From this perspective, objects resulting from the production of art are not much more than an aid for communication.

Today much of the art made escapes traditional disciplinary confines both in terms of craft and cognition. It ventures instead into political activism, community service, sociological research, and other forms of good citizenship. These activities prove that an artist doesn't have to be a nineteenth-century romantic eccentric, but may be a good a citizen. In terms of cognition, however, these activities often produce redundancy. There is no exploration of the unknown. Cognition rarely transcends ingenuity and is not expanded. If art is defined as a form of cognition, the questions posed to the public move away from the usual "Do you get it?", "Do you like it?", or "Are you becoming aware?" The real task becomes something other than having the public "get it," "like it," or have their "awareness raised." The questions become "what will you do with it?" and "how will you carry it further on your own?" That makes us all—artists and museum people—facilitators for what ultimately will be a real social and political development.

The choice between art as production and art as acquisition of knowledge therefore leads to very different sorts of commitment. It's much easier to promote a canon when art is classed as production; that's why this approach is so favored by those engaged in the construction of a global market. In this view, it's assumed that the public should move toward the art object to become more sophisticated. The field of "art

appreciation” helps in this task. It expands the consumer base and promotes the stability of the canon. From this point of view, to move art towards the audience is considered a negative activity since it leads to conventionality.



This is part of a bigger picture, one that encompasses pedagogy. In traditional education, old knowledge is imparted rather than new knowledge created. This approach to education is considered essential to the national economy and has the effect of conflating training with education. In a basic sense, it's seen as useful to the market and essential to the maintenance of a stable society. In a more refined view, it's seen as important to the nurture of a meritocracy. The educational process is developed on the basis of a social canon that's been internalized as the default setting for thinking about teaching and learning. It's based on three assumptions: 1. that time is owned by the employer and not the employee; 2. that work (at least for most) is focused on survival; and 3. that leisure time is used for consumption. In a general sense,

activities related to formal education aim to increase the prestige and competitiveness of the country. Every country being, of course, much greater than all other countries.

Typical of all this is the educational push for STEM, the acronym for the subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. As far as I know there has been no attempt by museums to formulate a concerted response to a future shaped by STEM. There is a tepid movement encouraging STEAM, integrating an A for art. But there is no STEMMING AGAINST STEM movement.

It seems silly and grandiloquent enough to design education for the greatness of a country, and to make official declarations typical now in the US, like this: “With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.”⁷ Or, the British equivalent: “For our prosperity to continue, the government believes we need high levels of skills in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), and citizens that value them.”⁸

But this is only the surface of the problem. The STEM ideologues feel that promoting interdisciplinarity and creativity within the science-oriented curriculum is an obvious and persuasive answer to all possible objections. Though, it in fact subtly imposes boundaries on the possibility for speculation and fantasy, enclosing exploration within a tight rational and functional frame of reference. The underlying message is that it’s good to be creative as long it’s not art. Creativity is good if applied to disciplines that are rational and have a useful application. The new rage is for children’s programs that encourage play with robotic toys and the writing of basic algorithms for them. It’s true that this may be the new literacy and will prepare them for the world they are likely to encounter, turning them more quickly into adults. But it’s unlikely to prepare them to critique the direction of the world they encounter or to think about things using metrics other than efficiency, expedience, and “success.” The other new rage seems to be coloring books for adults. Oddly, they infantilize without giving the freedom that children still possess. So adults are not being prepared to change the world, either.

If we choose to deal with art as the pursuit of knowledge instead of objects, the discussion of a canon becomes much more complicated. There is first the role of knowledge: is knowledge a field to be mastered or is it a platform from which to explore what we don’t know? Even in the first and more conservative interpretation, different people perceive differently, know different things, invoke different references, and have different tacit understandings. All these differences are projected onto the art object and succeed or fail in direct communication. Schools and museums tend to conceive of the challenge as one of bringing light into the corners of “lesser knowledge,” patronizingly filling the gaps of “public ignorance.”

The notion of lesser knowledge belongs to disciplinary thinking, according to which there are quantities of knowledge stored within specialized cubicles. But if we accept knowledge as a configuration that gives some order to our perception of the universe, then we are left with an array of “different,” rather than “lesser” knowledge systems. One may want to bridge rather than reaffirm these differences, and the canon is one of the tools for that. However, the canon is a “politically incorrect” tool, to say the least. Its interests are neither clearly defined nor what they claim to be; at the least, they don’t serve what and who they should serve. When applied to artistic speculation, any closed knowledge system is a confining tool. Creativity in a closed system stops at ingenuity and can’t go any further. Creativity needs an open system to produce art. To function at its best, pedagogical institutions have to work with open systems of knowledge, or try to open them, so as to unleash autodidactic processes in the viewer. This requires an open and flexible process for defining the canon. Thus, any presentation of a canon should include the possibilities of challenging the canon, so that it can be adjusted by the people rather than imposed upon them.

In an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Ai Wei Wei, who studied in a very restrictive academic environment in China, commented on his life as a student.⁹ He was thrilled when friends brought him some Western art books. He loved those on Impressionism, but when he saw one about Jasper Johns he tossed it into the garbage. Both he and the interviewer refer to the story as a travesty instead of seeing in it

a conflict of canons. The references needed to appreciate Johns were excessively European-US canon-specific and escaped Wei Wei's education. On the other hand, given its superficial appeal to taste and more digestible fare, Impressionist works seemed to be less "canon-provincial."

If I were given to tossing books into the trashcan, I wouldn't be beyond getting rid of some Chinese master like Wu Guanzhong. Looking for a parallel to Jasper Johns I picked him from Google after typing: "Chinese painting master 1950." When I saw some of the images I was tempted to class his work as irredeemable kitsch.¹⁰ But the only thing I would be stating with my dismissal is that this Chinese master doesn't fit the standards of my canon. This is the same as saying that I can't project onto that work anything that might be interesting to me. Meanwhile, from the Chinese canon's point of view, my action is one of ignorance, or of lesser knowledge.

Love and death are topics broad enough to be universal. However, the mechanics generated by both, and the poetics that glorify them, go from universality all the way down to the very concrete and local. That is why, ultimately, any universal language slowly subdivides into dialects. Within this, to have an opinion about which language—and what in language—is good and what is bad, or what transcends functionality to enter sublimity, becomes very difficult. If I have to refer to a canon it's because the ability to judge is placed beyond me. I will have to enter an authoritarian structure and consult a specialist in the canon: a cultural gatekeeper who tells me what-is-what. We are back to being taught instead of learning. And the gatekeeper either lives in a hegemonic center or is influenced by somebody living there. Is it the gatekeeper then, overextending the job description, who tries to be Aladdin's genie in disguise?

Our motivation in this meeting is, in one way or another, to help the common good worldwide. And yet, although we probably would like this to be a universal discussion, we are only making local chatter. This locality pertains to Western, middle-class, post-Enlightenment culture. Typically, here, we also believe in the sanctity of data. Oddly, this includes an admixture of superstition: we respect icons presumed to house the genie. And, to top it all off, we add the belief that quantitative thinking is rational and rules the universe, its power external to us.

Opposing this we have the belief that knowledge constantly expands. We act on the assumption that the universe is ultimately entirely knowable, even though we sense this isn't a real possibility. We emphasize the accumulation of data as links in a chain of expanding knowledge, even though we are aware that the expansion of knowledge depends more on adjusting our patterning and making leaps in connection than in simply gathering information. Data, as with any form of consumable unit, is nothing more than a vehicle. When put at the center of teaching and learning, it supports an authoritative transfer of information which in turn stifles imagination.

Baumgarten—perhaps because he lived in a simpler world—was able to divide truth into just three parts: general concepts, things that really exist in our world, and things that can only be imagined in a different world. The first, which he calls aesthetic/dogmatic, consists of generalities that may be represented artistically. The second category is aesthetic/historical. The third, and more important for our purposes here, is the "poetic way of thinking, even if it doesn't take the form of poems."¹¹ That's where *we* are the real genie.

In this classification system for truth, the parts we may call the abstract and the real are not only those with direct functional applications, but are also the easier ones to handle. Maybe that is why education has focused so much on them and has neglected the poetic aspect. The poetic part is precisely the one that allows us to escape closed knowledge systems and open up new ones. This has implications for cognition, but also has political implications insofar as it affects imagination. Following Baumgarten, one might say that the poetic and the political cannot be kept neatly apart. This would seem to have important implications for education.

In Mexico City, there are two museums placed about 50 meters from one another. One is the Museo Jumex. It's a sophisticated exhibition space designed by David Chipperfield in the traditional discrete functionalist style, focused on mainstream contemporary art. The other is Carlos Slim's Museo Soumaya, designed by his son-in-law Fernando Romero. It's built in the style of a Frank Gehry toilet and dedicated to second-rate and sentimental classics. Both museums believe in the existence of a universal canon. Within that belief, specialists generally laud Jumex for its good taste and put down Slim's for its bad taste. I have to confess that my subjective taste clearly inclines towards Jumex, since I'm a product of my class and education. But my personal taste in respect of the two museums' versions of taste is irrelevant. The difference between them shows an ignored and badly conducted class struggle.



Slim is a populist while Jumex is elitist. Paradoxically, Slim's museum deals with an extremely closed knowledge system, only informed by conventional taste. Jumex, in its effort to be refined and cutting-edge, accepts experimentation and, with it, the opening up of the system. Slim's museum tries to freeze the canon and protect it from challenge. Jumex welcomes changes as long they pass through the filter of the gatekeepers and may be classed as art.

The rift raises many questions in regard to the canon: Is the canon constructed for an open or a closed system of knowledge? Where does the canon start? Who owns it and why? And: Who is served by it? It would seem that to pose these—often political—questions is the first task for any institution that wishes to have a consistent program. It doesn't matter whether it wants to serve the government, its patrons, the community, or strike a balance among them.

Typing in the word "Leonardo" on my computer and the same day in the different versions of Google for Spain, France, U.S., Italy, and Brazil, only Spain listed Leonardo da Vinci before Leonardo di Caprio. If a museum today would dare to exhibit works of high art side-by-side with popular art or even kitsch, the majority of the public would probably favor the latter. Meaning that they would vote for Slim's museum over the Jumex. The easy reaction is to see this as indicating "lesser knowledge" amongst the public which should be corrected by the provision of more information. The more difficult reaction, however, is to aim to stimulate the autodidactic mechanisms that enable members of the public to explore their own creative potential. Some museums try to do that, but most do not.

Most museums still base their educational activities on "art appreciation." Though the process really starts with the hang of the collection, it's a mission usually defined as separate from curatorial work and post-facto mixed in with other public relations activities. You learn to look "at" what is presented, and because it's being presented you automatically know that it's important. More progressive art educators, while taking the importance of the artwork as a given, encourage looking "through" it. The hope then is to discover the universe—or some kind of universe—that might encompass other disciplines and therefore go beyond art. People are led to discuss what they see and what they think about what they see. This sounds persuasive, although the viewer only sees, thinks, and learns what the art piece allows them to. They are led to believe that the shape of the light at the end of the tunnel represents the outside. They don't realize that what they see is nothing more than the outline of the exit.

If instead of “at” or “through” we go “around” the work of art, we encounter far more interesting questions that allow us to put the genie back where it belongs. Among these questions are:

1. What are the conditions that generated the work, or, why does the work exist?
2. Who is the work serving?
3. What is the problem it’s solving?
4. Is the problem well solved or could it be solved in better ways, either in art-related media or using other disciplines?
5. Is the piece indispensable, and if so, why and for whom?
6. Is it addressed to me or to somebody else?

And finally, what may sound like the typical Western capitalist question:

7. What’s in it for me?

The answer to this last question should not be “the betterment of my taste and increased respect for the canon.” It should instead be: “my personal creative development.” Thinking this way about art allows the genie to transfer their power to us. It helps us understand that there is more to contend with than love and death. We would be led to change not only the way museums relate to people, but also the way education is pursued. The genie may even help us iron out some of the minor issues pertaining to communal communication and some larger issues related to social and political inequality. I don’t really know that art is able to solve all of our problems, but trying to believe so helps us to maintain our sanity.

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This essay is an advance excerpt from Luis Camnitzer, One Number is Worth One Word, forthcoming from e-flux journal and Sternberg Press. The text is an edited version of a keynote speech for a conference exploring “The Idea of the Global Museum” at the Museum für Gegenwart at the Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin in December 2016.

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