



"CHECKPOINT ILGEN #13"

"THE NEW SILK ROADS – INCLUDING ART?"

Discussion on 29th September, 2017

REPORT

A GOOD STARTING POINT

Fré Ilgen

The “Checkpoint Ilgen” is the idealistic art-salon since 2007 hosted by Jacqueline and Fré Ilgen in the salon-studio in their private apartment, Berlin, Germany; the format is an informal talk-show, including a one evening international exhibition and, in general, an audience with a maximum of 55 persons. “Checkpoint Ilgen#13” required an adaptation to host an audience of 80 persons.

The 'Checkpoint Ilgen' series focuses on the genuine, natural and straightforward experience offered by artworks.
A series publicly acknowledged by Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch through their decision to support “Checkpoint Ilgen” with the grant involved in the Montblanc de la Culture Arts Patronage Award 2014 they themselves received.

For more information: <http://www.freilgen.de/activ-checkpoint.html>

“CHECKPOINT ILGEN#13”



We have to thank Udo van Kampen for introducing us to Ambassador Bolat Nussupov, and thank our dear friends Yoyo Liu and Lian Yang, and the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China, for connecting us to Mr. Wang Tianling. Special thanks for supportive actions: Ulla and Heiner Pietzsch, Dr. Richard Schütze, Silke Fichner (The English Bookshop at Dussmann das KulturKaufhaus), Seung-ju (Sehwa Museum of Art, Seoul), Sundaram Tagore and Ben Rosenblatt (Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York/Singapore/Hong Kong), and Pamela Biel for simultaneous translation.

Subject: “THE NEW SILK ROADS – INCLUDING ART?”
Date: Friday 29th September 2017; 19:00-21:00 + informal part;
Location: Fré & Jacqueline Ilgen, private apartment, Berlin, Germany
Main speakers: Mr. Wang Tianling (Counselor Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Berlin), Ambassador Bolat Nussupov (Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Berlin), Dr. Parag Khanna (global strategist);
Moderation: Fré Ilgen (artist-theorist-curator-author);
Organization: Fré & Jacqueline Ilgen
Pictures: Achim Kleuker, Berlin

Attendance:

Audience: 80 persons;
Nationalities: Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Italy, Israel, the Netherlands, Singapore, South-Korea, Spain, UK, USA;
Professions: artists, art dealers, academics, art collectors, CEO’s and board-members of corporations, bankers, specialized politicians, policy-makers (incl from the German Ministries of Finance and Economics), economists, journalists, lawyers, consultants, a leading Chinese poet, and former ambassadors.



Mr. Wang Tianling, Counselor of Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Berlin (left)



Dr. Parag Khanna (left), Fré Ilgen (right)



Ambassador Bolat Nussupov,
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Berlin

Quoted from “CPI#13”

The quotes in this report are not transcripts but summaries.

The New Silk Roads is a beautiful vision in our post-colonial times that will unite Eurasia for the first time in history, but we cannot be naïve and are aware of the enormous complexity of so many issues in all involved countries and their local governments. It takes time for The New Silk Roads to be successful, and we have to be optimistic but realistic and have a lot of patience.

Mr. Wang Tianling,

Counselor of Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Berlin

We have close collaborations with many countries, like with China, Russia and Germany. The largest part of all cargo delivered from China to Germany, for instance, goes through and involves Kazakhstan. The quantity of trains has tripled in the last two years and continues to grow.

Ambassador Bolat Nussupov

the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Berlin

The largest Western cities will be New York, Los Angeles, London and Moscow, with about 12-15 million citizens. The mega cities of the world, however, are in Asia, involving 50-70 million citizens. The Asians tend more and more to stay inside Asia, the enormous amounts of young people generate a lot of entrepreneurship. Instead of assuming they may come over here, you may like to go over there yourself.

Dr. Parag Khanna

leading global strategist, world traveler, and best-selling author



THE REPORT

The extensive amount of information on the economic motivations and real developments of “The New Silk Roads” (or: “One Belt, One Road”), as initiated by China in about 2013, is still largely new to many people, although the trains roll from China to Germany (and beyond) since a few years.

The attempt to bring art in a realistic way into the equation, made the “Checkpoint Ilgen#13” experimental, challenging and exciting.

The success is the fact that so many from such a variety of professional backgrounds in business and in art attended this discussion. The subject is currently fast growing in importance.

“Checkpoint Ilgen#13” offered *a good starting point*. The mutual interest bridging economy-art is the basic human interconnection: in business one needs to meet the business-partner at eye-level, in art this is the actual main focus. ¹

Fré Ilgen, Berlin, October 2017

¹ Hardly any artist in the world makes art only for him/herself – responses from other persons are needed to understand what one is doing. Artists thus naturally (should) have an interest in other people.

MOTIVATION FOR “CPI#13”

REALITY CHECK:

The current general and global loss of excitement for purchasing art is a serious threat to the financial basics of artists and intermediaries. The actual art market has substantially shrunk. New incentives are much desired. The proposed concept builds on the historical tradition of art as effective tool paving the path for trade between cultures, and bringing back genuine excitement for visually strong art.

FUSING THE PRAGMATIC WITH THE IDEALISTIC

The New Silk Roads relink East Asia with Eurasia by train, to be upgraded as fast track railways.² The Chinese enterprise will have a vast economic impact on East Asia, the whole of Central Asia, the Middle East as well as on Europe, Russia, even the USA. History shows that artworks are intercultural tools for enjoyment and lasting connections, demonstrating sincere interest in and respect for each other. The foundation for all lasting business.

OPTION: ART AS PART OF BUSINESS STRATEGY

In our times we learn that art would be something elevated and independent, but the long history of any culture teaches how art flourished as part of economic strategies functioning as important “human tool”, connecting very different peoples and cultures.

² 2012 showed some 7500 containers transported in this way to Europe, it is estimated that by 2020 this will be 7.5 million.



ART

NOT ABOUT POLITICS, NOT FOR ALL ART

This discussion of business and art does *not* aim to criticize the commercial basis, the political, environmental or social consequences of the New Silk Roads. To be able to be of interest to business objectives, the art to be considered should speak for and by itself, offering anyone from any other culture a genuine visual experience.

The art to be included cannot be art for which the explanation or statement would be dominant (like in conceptual art). When art would like to become part of business strategies again, it is clear a diplomatic emphasis is more important and art may have to be more modest.

BUSINESS

Note: this page is an addition to the discussion, to clarify business interests

PROJECTS WITH ART INCLUDED IN MARKETING BUDGETS

The idea is that businesses should use a part of their marketing budgets for art. Art thus as part of marketing can only function when the selected art corresponds with the (business) strategies of connecting with the markets of other countries.

ART PROJECTS MATCHING BUSINESS STRATEGIES

The objective as proposed by “Checkpoint Ilgen#13” is substantially different from standard intercultural exchange. The purpose is creating new financial funding for fine arts, funding that does not come from governments or existing cultural institutions, but is generated by and from corporations with a business interest in “The New Silk Roads”.

The key factor is not to focus on national presentations of any contemporary art (according to Western perimeters), but on exhibitions, purchases and donations to museums in countries along “The New Silk Roads”, of artworks from many places in the world, that visually match the interest of the local peoples.³

PURPOSE

Such art presentations offer natural foundations for the desired and long lasting friendly relationships that are the foundation of doing business along “The New Silk Roads”.

Intended are art exhibitions, art projects financed by the involved business-partners. The selection of artworks cannot be based on any (Western) art professional’s conviction what art should be about, but on art that by its sheer visual quality is accessible and can be enjoyed by any local audience.

³ From neuroscience one can learn simple facts and sensible implications that are helpful in defining the perimeters for selecting the kinds of art that naturally speak to anyone in the world. This is one of my main focusses of interest.



Mini poster foldout as part of the “CPI#13” invitation/program flyer, the main map provided by Dr. Parag Khanna, the small map (left) showing the three main routes China-Europe



Fré Ilgen

INTRODUCTION

Excerpts from the Introduction by Fré Ilgen

Recently, in a talk in New York, Dr. Parag Khanna mentioned that although in school all of us have learned that Europe and Asia would be separate continents, in fact there is only one huge continent we may call **Eurasia**. This correct observation brings to the point what we will focus on tonight. The large map is provided by Dr. Khanna.

Since 2008 some basic things have changed in the art market. In our invitation you will have read our “Reality Check” statement. The actual shrunken art market challenges the existence for many artists and art intermediaries alike – this is serious and, for the first time in history, a global phenomenon.

Following East Asian wisdom that finding pragmatic solutions is more helpful than focusing on the causes of problems, tonight we will not discuss the reasons that caused the art market to be so tough, but offer a plausible and potential chance for positive change.

We all know too well there always has been a lot of talking about art, somewhere between the perimeters of art to be entirely free and the other extreme that art would be just a financial investment commodity. **The fact is that the experience art offers is not about money, but there cannot be art without money.**

History would not have given us the Renaissance or the Baroque without art fundamentally being subjected to economic objectives.

I do not think in our times we can demand from any government to provide more funding for art, nor to ask corporations to merely sponsor what we as art professionals want to do.

When art becomes part again of business strategies this does not imply businesses will dictate artists what to make, but may select art that has its focus on people in other countries. By financing public art exhibitions and purchases of artworks, such businesses publicly show their interest in contributing to such other people’s well-being.

About a year ago a Korean friend, the CEO of a large corporation, informed me he is setting up a new business in a country in Central Asia, explaining this to be along “The New Silk Roads”. As this was new to me, back home I researched a bit and found the book “Connectography” by Dr. Parag Khanna. I do not exaggerate when I say maybe one of the most important books in our time, providing a very different map of the world than we have been taught.

If precise verbal expressions would be sufficient for making business deals, no business person in the world would need to travel ever since the old telephone was invented. Reality shows the opposite to be true. In personal meetings we all appreciate that features play a role we immediately sense, but cannot always precisely describe. This is the platform where art is at home.

Let’s skip for a moment all we know about art and acknowledge that art has the fundamental capacity to immediately speak to people from very different cultures, allowing very similar responses, because our brains and eyes are not that different.

This real value of art matches the statements regarding the business involvement in “The New Silk Roads”: **the fundamental need for long lasting and enduring friendly relationships with all involved countries**. This is the role art played in trade and business all through history, a role forgotten in past decades. Thus, building on the history of trade, our proposal is not as strange as it may seem and is quite realistic.

The past half year I frequently discussed my ideas with a great variety of persons in the worlds of art, business, politics and journalism. Not only locally in Berlin or even in Europe, but also in the US, Asia and the Middle East. Tonight is the result of all encouraging feedback.

You may like to know tonight’s audience contains artists, art dealers, academics, art collectors, but also CEO’s and board-members of corporations, specialized politicians, policy-makers, economists, lawyers, consultants, journalists, a wine importer, and former ambassadors. I hope this makes you curious who is sitting next to you!

Being aware that much of the “New Silk Roads”, and Central Asia will be new to most of you, we will mainly focus on basic information. I do hope you can keep in mind what I just mentioned about the natural role and key role that art can play in any intercultural communication and therefore also in all economic enterprises. In such particular context art cannot be the main objective, but art functions as natural “human tool”, demonstrating one cares about the country with whom one wishes to do business.

I sincerely hope you will appreciate why we announced tonight’s discussion is not about politics as such. Our experimental view on the New Silk Roads Including Art matches the main focus of our “Checkpoint Ilgen” series to refresh interest in and positive excitement about the role and actual value of artworks in your personal everyday lives and possibly for your own homes, thus also as fundamental and natural means to connect to people from other parts of the world at actual eye-level.

THE DISCUSSION

THE SPEAKERS

While Dr. Parag Khanna is an internationally acknowledged expert on geopolitical changes, including on the fast development of all major infrastructure projects that define new paths for economies, both Mr. Wang Tianling and Mr. Bolat Nussupov represent two major players in the development of “The New Silk Roads”: the initiator China, and the main country in Central Asia, Kazakhstan.⁴

Parag Khanna is a leading global strategist, world traveler, and best-selling author. He is a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre on Asia and Globalisation at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. He is also the Managing Partner of Hybrid Reality, a geostrategic advisory firm, and Co-Founder & CEO of Factotum, a leading content branding agency. He holds a PhD from the London School of Economics, and degrees from the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. He is a Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum, and a Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow, Robert Bosch Academy, Berlin. www.paragkhanna.com

Mr. Tianling WANG, Counselor of Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Berlin since May, 2015; Senior Research Fellow Institute of Modern International Relations, Tsinghua University; Visiting scholar of QINGHUA university Sept. 2013 Aug. 2014. Counselor of Chinese Embassy Tokyo Japan 2008-2013. M.A. Of Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy 1997. Joining the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993. A graduate of Renmin University in Beijing 1985-1993.

Ambassador H.E. Bolat Nussupov, the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Berlin; 1993 German studies at the Almaty Institute for Foreign Languages; 1995 Diplomatic Academy Vienna; 2005 Business Administration at the Technical University of Almaty. Since January 1994 active in the Foreign Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan; 2011-2012 Counsellor and Head of the Economic Division in the Kazakh embassy in Berlin; 2012-2014 Minister Counsellor of the Kazakh embassy in Berlin; July-September 2014 Chargé d’Affaires of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Berlin.

Fré Ilgen (the Netherlands), based in Berlin, is a sculptor, painter, theorist, curator, author. Together with his wife Jacqueline, initiator of the “Checkpoint Ilgen” series. He is active in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, United States, and Australia, including more than 45 solo exhibitions (incl. 5 in New York) and more than 150 group exhibitions in galleries, museums, corporations, foundations, art fairs, and biennials, like “Frontiers Reimagined” (Tagore Foundation), Collaterale Program 56th Venice Biennial 2015. Books include “Art? No Thing! Analogies between Art, Science and Philosophy”, 2004, and “ARTIST? The Hypothesis of Bodiness”, Wasmuth Verlag, 2014.

⁴ **Note:** during “CPI#13” a large map of “Eurasia” was displayed including existing and new infrastructure connections, from Dr. Khanna’s book “Connectography”, map Nr. 16; this map is the same that is included in our printed program brochure as a kind of mini-poster.



The discussion consisted of four main subjects:

1. The New Silk Roads – One Belt, One Road:

the basics of the vision, the reasons, the mission, the means

2. Central Asia and the interest for businesses

Eurasia is the new economic focus; art as classical medium for intercultural connecting.⁵

The map (as on the “CPI#13” invitation) shows 2/3 of Eurasia – Europe is the 1/3 missing on this map – but this area involves more than half of the world’s population. These countries are all modernizing, they do not only focus on the sovereignty within their countries, but focus a lot on the connectivity with the countries across their borders. In this process Kazakhstan is the front and center, but Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other such countries also are up and coming. Summarized: the enormous population in that part of the world has actually started to grow together.

Dr. Parag Khanna
leading global strategist, world traveler, and best-selling author

⁵ Kazakhstan, formerly independent since 1991, geographically seven times the size of Germany, maybe as large as Germany, France, Spain and even Poland combined, has but some 18 million inhabitants, life is focused in several larger cities, Astana is the capital, under leadership of President Nursultan Nasarbajew, the country has made fast progress, including 60 state universities (incl a Kazakh-British and a Kazakh-German university), about 50 ethnic groups and many religions of which a tolerant islam is the largest, the second orthodox Christianity. Kazakhstan’s percentage of analphabets is the same as in Germany (only 2.5%), is one of the world’s most rich countries in natural resources with vast reserves of oil, gas, and a market leader in many minerals. The originally Soviet rocket base Baikonour is on Kazakh soil. In recent times. Kazakhstan is promoting international investment to be less depending for their future on only these natural resources. The World Expo 2017 on Energy, in Kazakhstan, is a clear signal. Kazakhstan has close partnerships with neighbors China, Russia, but also with the USA plus a growing collaboration with the EC. Museums in Astana are the large Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan – focusing on the long history of the country – and the A. Kasteyev State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Kazakhstan – which includes collections of abstract ornaments, figurative paintings and sculptures from the European Renaissance and Baroque, from Russian times and modern Kazakh art. Astana will become the seat of the Eurasian Council for Cultural Development of the Silk Road.



3. The dialogue between cultures at “eye-level”

The necessity for Europeans to reach beyond a Eurocentric attitude.
The key-factor of the success of “The New Silk Roads”: long term intercultural friendships.

Ever since the 1980’s the leading directive in China continues to be to open up to the world, this includes art, exemplified by many exhibitions, for instance, with artists from Ethiopia or Germany.

Mr. Wang Tianling,
Counselor of Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Berlin

Tolerance and mutual understanding between cultures is considered very important in Kazakhstan. This is the main accomplishment of our country in the past 25 years.

Ambassador Bolat Nussupov
the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Berlin

4. Pragmatic perimeters for art as part of intercultural business-strategies

Both Mr. Wang Tianling and Ambassador Bolat Nussupov⁶ each mentioned good examples of the ongoing intercultural exchange in their countries, varying from student exchange, artists meeting artists, to national presentations in their countries to expose their own citizens to other cultures. They both confirmed their countries have a serious interest in art as means for intercultural dialogue.

⁶ Mr. Nussupov mentioned the “Blue Train Of Culture and Economy” project, that is combining art and business presentations in 35 countries.







CONCLUSIONS

“Checkpoint Ilgen#13” was a starting point, introducing the involved players to the objective of art becoming part of business strategies again.

The lead for the selection of artworks should be **“for the public, with the public”**, while not necessarily decided by the public. As mentioned earlier, knowledge and directives exist how to do this.⁷

While “being part of the global world” is more important in our today’s world than pushing national presentations, such exhibitions should include art from many countries in the world, including local artists. One may consider buying such artworks and offer these as additions to local existing public collections.⁸

It is a “public secret” that through presentations of the right kinds of artworks governments, investors or businesses do not only reach out by demonstrating good intentions for contributing to the public well-being, but also create a neutral ground where decision-makers and the middle and top in business, academics and other professions of any country like to meet.

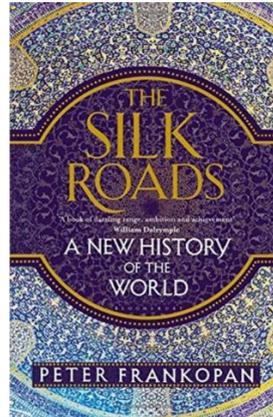
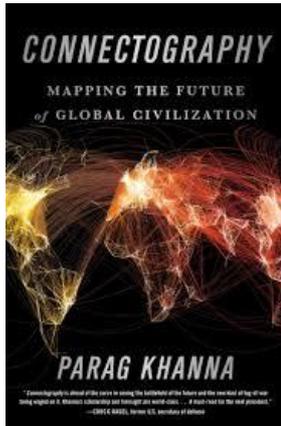
The “Checkpoint Ilgen#13” clearly demonstrated that currently a first interest in the proposed idea exists on the side of businesses, on the side of China and Kazakhstan, while knowledge and experience exist how to support decision makers.

The decision is entirely in the hands of businesses for making a next step.

⁷ See footnote 2, page 5 of this report.

⁸ For examples on what kinds of art this may concern, in “Advised Literature” some books and catalogues are mentioned. In for instance East Asia and the Middle East, one can meet a lot of genuine creativity and good artists, that are never exhibited in the West because their works do not fit in the Eurocentric opinion of art professionals what art should be about. An opinion that should be challenged.

ADVISED LITERATURE

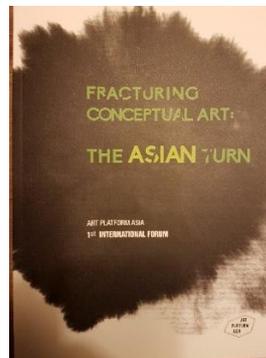
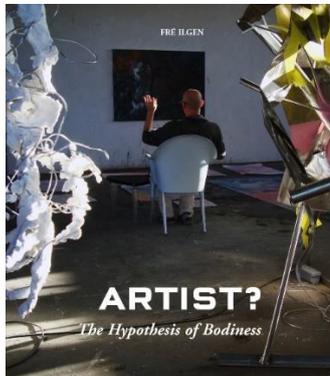


Parag Khanna

A detailed and complete overview of major infrastructure plans and changed perspectives on large cities, reshaping the map of the actual world. Random House: 2016, ISBN 978 0 8129 8855 0

Peter Frankopan

The extensive historical overview of the original Silk Roads up to today, building on published research from sources in the West, Middle East and East Asia. Knopf: 2016, ISBN 978 1 4088 3999 7



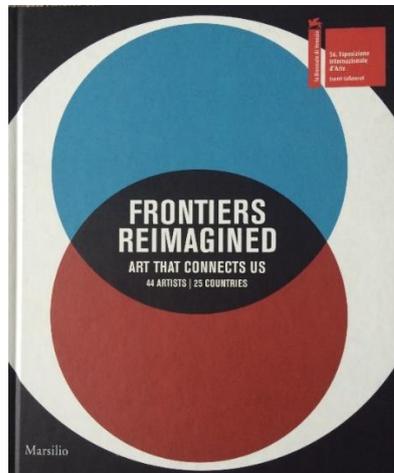
Fré Ilgen

ARTIST? The Hypothesis of Bodiness, contains revolutionary insights in the complex self of the artist and the experience offered by works of art – the involvement of the biological processes in creating and encountering artworks.
Wasmuth Verlag: 2014, ISBN 978 3 8030 3364 2

Kate Y Lim ed.

NEW: "Fracturing Conceptual Art: The Asian Turn" (Art Platform Asia: 2017);
Thoughts by six different authors that shake the conceptual authority of art, re-engaging with the artists and their art-making. Edited by Kate Lim. ISBN 979-11-961693-0-5
Available at: <http://artplatformasia.net/>

EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL ART



“Mirrors of Continuous Change”, **curated by Fré Ilgen** for Taekwang Industries, exhibition catalogue Seoul, Korea (ROK), 2010-2011

A first presentation of 26 artists from various countries in Asia, North and South America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, combining famous and less known artists.

Hosted at Ilju&Seonhwa Gallery, most works currently at SEHWA MUSEUM, Seoul,

Available at:

<https://www.sehwamuseum.org/en/main.do>

Exhibition catalogue “Frontiers Reimagined – Art That Connects Us”, **curated by Sundaram Tagore** (co-curator Marius Kwint), official part of 56. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte, la Biennale di Venezia, 2015,

Organized by the Tagore Foundation International, Museo di Palazzo Grimani, Venice, Italy.

44 Artists – 25 Countries

Marsilio Editore spa and Tagore Foundation International, 2015. ISBN 978 88 317 2193

Available at:

<http://www.tagorefoundationinternational.com/>

Examples of Global art exhibited at “CPI#13”:

Christian Awe, Germany, painting

www.christianawe.com

Natvar Bhavsar, USA/India, painting

www.natvarbhavsar.com

Ilaria Bochicchio, Italy, painting

www.ilariabochicchio.com

Sollai Cartwright, Australia, sculpture

www.sollai.com

Paul Dacey, USA, painting

www.pauldacey.com

Fré Ilgen, Netherlands, sculpture

www.freilgen.com

Philippe Weber Jahanguir, Switzerland, painting

www.jahanguir.com

Utagawa Kunisada, Japan, block print

Richard Purdy, USA, painting

www.richardpurdy.net

Stefan Ssykor, Germany, painting

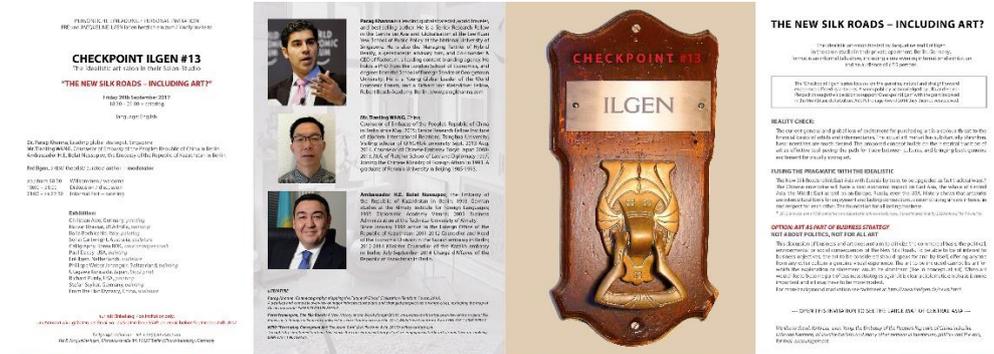
www.s-ss.de

From the Han Dynasty, China, sculpture

+ special guest: Hazem Taha Hussein, painting

www.hazemtahahusseini.com

Images on this page show both sides of "CPI#13" invitation/program flyer.



The New Silk Roads is going to keep us busy for at least the next 30 years.

Dr. Parag Khanna
 leading global strategist, world traveler, and best-selling author



Top row, left to right: Ssykor, Korean calligraphy, Jahanguir, Kunisada, Purdy, Awe, Ilgen, Bhavsar;
 Left, under Ssykor: Dacey (disk)
 Bottom row, left to right: Cartwright, Bochicchio, Han