

Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand

Che Kyongfa

The three countries featured in this exhibition were Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, which incorporated modernism as a result of colonization or through the modernization policy pursued by the monarchy. The exhibition was held in 1995 in four cities: Tokyo, Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta. One curator from each of the respective countries and three curators from Japan were invited to collaborate in field work and organize the presentation by country. While tracing the acceptance of Western modernism in each of the countries from the late 19th century to the contemporary age, the exhibition aspired to provide criticism against the implicit universalism of Western nationalism through presenting various movements that rejected modernism as well as individual artists' pursuit of national identity.

Tatehata Akira (Professor, Tama Art Univeristy) develops his argument in the opening essay of the catalogue, "Art as Criticism," from the following sentence: "The idea of Asia should not be presented as representing counter values [against Western modernism]."^[1] While pointing out that multiculturalism, which started to permeate the field of arts in the 1980s, can easily fall into egalitarianism or absolutist relativism, and how differences can turn into stereotypes, Tatehata claims that the ideological significance of multiculturalism lies in how "the standards of judgment created out of a certain history and culture can admit the value of works made according to another culture's standards of judgment."^[2] Contrastingly, as Mizusawa Tsutomu (Curator, The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura) writes in his essay, constantly engaging with differences and the Other

without returning to the modernist myth of the past already means "ignoring the fantasy Asia shining dimly beyond."^[3]

[1][2] Tatehata Akira, "Art as Criticism," *Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand*, exhibition catalogue, The Japan Foundation Asia Center, 1995, p.200

[3] Mizusawa Tsutomu, "Whispers of a Lost Child: The Heritage of Realism," *Asian Modernism: Diverse Development in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand*, exhibition catalogue, The Japan Foundation Asia Center, 1995, p.220



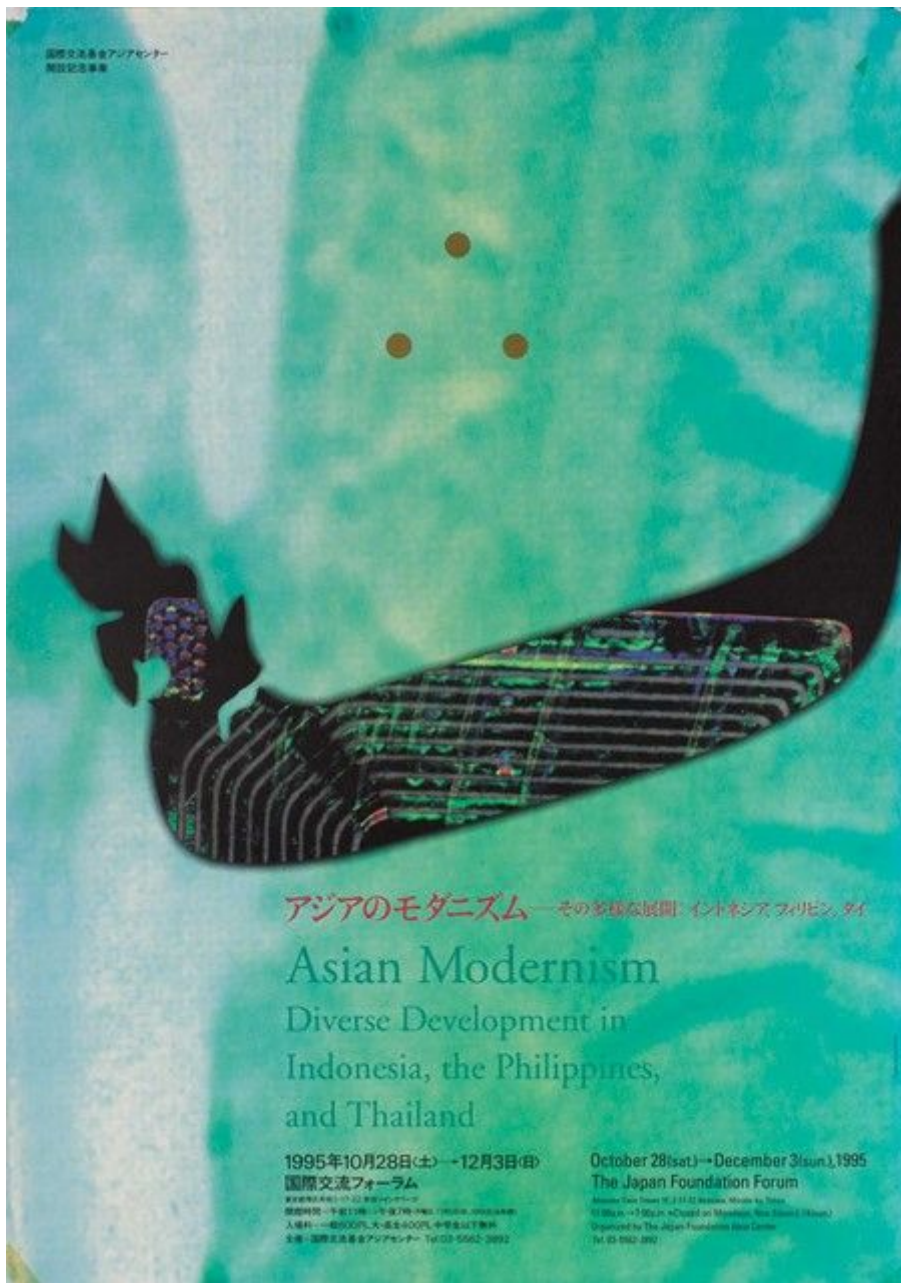
Exhibition view of "Asian Modernism" (Indonesia section), The Japan Foundation Forum, 1995
Photo: Ueno Norihiro



Exhibition view of "Asian Modernism" (Thai section), The Japan Foundation Forum, 1995
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Exhibition view of "Asian Modernism" (Philippines section), The Japan Foundation Forum, 1995
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Poster of "Asian Modernism" (Tokyo), 1995
Design: Kondo Kazuya

Related Links

- The Japan Foundation Asian Art Archive "Asian Modernism"
https://www.jpf.go.jp/e/publish/asia_exhibition_history/17_95_modernism.html