

性であることが今後の地道な調査・研究の上でますます明らかになり、それと同時にそれぞれの現代性の価値も浮かび上がるに違いない。それらの価値は、必ずしも西欧の基準に照らして「高品質」である必要はない。国際的な美術マーケットやそれに付随するアートゲームからのフィードバックは、「リソース」の収奪を招来する危険性を秘めていること自体、すでに歴史の教訓であろう。アジアの「森」に消えていった無名の人々の記憶や、信じがたいほどに高度の造形へと到達している無名の職人たちの「工芸」や、無名の人々によって伝承されてきた芸能の数々——それらは、すでに「免疫」のある西欧社会よりも、ゆるやかに連なる(つまり、野放しの)アジアの諸国でこそ、今まさに崩壊しようとしている。現代のアジアの美術は、それをふたたび活性化させるための手段として、ふたたび「生活」のレベルでの無名の個別性への回路を探らなければならない。その出発点として、このシンポジウムを位置づけたい。

Session I

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Examining Asian Contemporary Art of the 1990s,  
Part 1: Reports from the Regions

Session I

**"Examining Asian Contemporary Art of the 1990s,  
Part 1: Reports from the Regions "**

The milieu of Asian art during the 1990s has gone through tumultuous changes along with the fluctuating economic and social conditions in the nations of Asia. There has been a dramatic increase in opportunities to see Asian art throughout the world, beyond the boundaries of the countries where it is originally produced. At the same time, the development of information media has accelerated the globalization of Asian art as we approach a new century.

In this session, some of the finest art critics from a number of Asian nations will sum up the situation of art in the 1990s in their country from their own point of view and discuss it in relation to the international art scene. These presentations will lay the groundwork for an active discussion of the achievements and problems of Asian art during the decade. Perspectives on the contemporary arts scene in the Asian region during the 1990s will be presented by panelists who represent some of the Asian countries that are active in the scene.

1. "It's Me!: The Main Theme of China's Contemporary Art in the 1990s "  
Leng Lin (Art Critic / China)
2. "Sensibility of New Generation"  
Seo Seongrok (Professor, Andong National University / Korea)
3. "Discursing in Regional Contemporary Art in Asia"  
Jim Supangkat (Art Critic / Indonesia)
4. "Back to the World: Anxiety and Exhilaration in Contemporary Indian Art"  
Ranjit Hoskote (Art Critic / India)

Discussion

Report and Comment on Session I

"Recognition and Action: Issues to be Solved in the Next Stage"

Miki Akiko (Independent Curator / Japan)

**It's Me!:****The Main Theme of China's Contemporary Art in the 1990s**

Leng Lin

Art Critic

For many Chinese people, the 1989 Tian'anmen Incident has exerted influence on all aspects of their life in a profound way. Under the influence of the incident, contemporary Chinese artists have generally felt disabled and depressed since the 1990s. In terms of the role they played, the artists have fallen from the spokesmen of social value in the 1980s to an embarrassing situation in which they had to prove their own legality of existing in the society. It has been imperative ever since for the artists to truly understand themselves and their surroundings. One after the other the artists began to abandon their pursuit for the ideal mode, a mode which in the 1980s was rendered as an attempt to establish a kind of "rational art." In the eyes of the Chinese artists, the concepts and artistic forms totally and uncritically copied from the West were somewhat empty and frail under the impact of the June 4 incident. They could not help but conduct self-rescue by shifting from conceptual expression of building the country and the great culture for the public to perceptive description of their own materiality. The individualization orientation marked a turning point in the contemporary Chinese art. It stands to reason to say that in the past ten years, China's art had basically developed along the individualization direction.

In the early 1990s, Chinese artists rebelled against the art trends of the 1980s with a view to shaking off their feeling of disablement and depression. Through returning to their private everyday life, they expected to seek *de novo* for evidence proving the legality of their existence in the society, meanwhile creating an artist world for themselves. Such needs of the artists have been well demonstrated in the "new-generation art" and the "cynical realistic art." Wang Huaxiang, a representative of the "new-generation art," said in his notes that "The conceptual things have been tiring. Artists should go back to their real, unexaggerated life." The "unexaggerated life" is tantamount to individual and material life. The artists need no longer acquire their understanding of things through filtering concepts. In fact they had already suspected the understanding obtained that way during the June 4 incident. What they wanted to do is to directly express themselves and depict their surroundings, in addition to conveying the attitudes resulted from such directness. This is what "new-generation artists" Liu Xiaodong and Wang Huaxiang, and "cynical realistic artists" Fang Lijun, Yue Minjun and Liu Wei have expressed in their works. The "new-generation art" and the "cynical realistic art" have thus established the direction of the

individualization.

In the mid-1990s, the artists extended the individualization tendencies established in early 1990s from the painting field to the performance art area. They did not just end with a kind of description with paintbrush; rather they wanted to perceive their self-existence through personal experience, an experience sometimes escalated into somewhat a self-abusing action. Artists Zhang Huan and Ma Liuming were typical examples in this case. On June 1, 1994, Zhang himself created an incident: a bare Zhang was bound in iron chains and hang on the roof beam. Within fifty minutes, Zhang had 250cc blood dripped from his body through a special medical equipment to a dish, which was placed on an electric stove. The blood, boiling and bubbling, was then turned to a coagulation, which gave off strong, somewhat sweet smell. Zhang truly experienced his existence on the material level, and this was a bloodily thorough self-evidence. This kind of self-abuse had developed the individualization orientation established in the early 1990s into experiencing self-existence through the endurance of human body — material. The action was as simple as to deny incursion of any meaning and conception. The self was purified as the simplest and most direct self-existence. The individualization was limited as to how to prove self-existence most thoroughly. The artists have thus avoided the dichotomy — China and West — that has troubled China for nearly 100 years. Through the most thorough ways, they attempted to create a concrete and practical "need principle," which was based on the needs of the live, fresh and flexible "self."

Because they had defined a "need principle," since the mid-1990s, the artists had begun to regard how their art was integrated with the society as the artistic criteria. No more would they isolate themselves with the aesthetics and non-ideology; rather they demonstrated their being in the society through the actual role they played in the social fabric. This banalistic criteria not only guided how the art is linked to the Chinese society, but also applied to how the art combines with the needs abroad. Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish the difference.

In the middle and later periods of the 1990s, a great number of contemporary Chinese art exhibitions were held in the West. These shows basically served to build up a kind of Chinese identity, and then in the identity they probed the relations between "China" and the "West." The various complicated postmodern theories provided impetus and framework for such a probing. The relationship between the Chinese art and the Western art has undergone some changes. They no more observed each other and tried to recognize one another. Rather, they instigated confluent and practical exchange to achieve a certain goal that they could share. The relation between "China" and the "West," a problem that had haunted China for a century, has once again popped up. But this time, there are no arguments about which

is the "Substance," and which one is the "Function." "China" and "West" are no more the value resources to choose from, but the strategical resources. These resources may be constantly adjusted and readjusted depending on "need principle." In the works created by Zhan Wang, Sui Jianguo, Zhuang Hui and Hong Lei during this period, we could detect their attempts to discover Chinese forms and images in a bid to define their identity. Also we could see that the others had no choice but accept the globalization trend in their life. Here the geographical distance is not the major factor leading to the difference between "China" and "West" — they have been readjusting to each other and geared into an unstoppable historical inevitability, as has demonstrated in works by artists including Hong Hao, Wang Xingwei, Liu Ye and Ma Liuming. During this period, the contemporary Chinese art has integrated into the structure of the institution of the world. The integrated part has been undergoing readjustment with the globalization, while deepening the globalization all at the same time. In addition, with the growth of the market economy in China, market opened up a breach for the development of China's contemporary art by allowing the art to be liberated from the traditional organizational operation. It also made it possible for people to trace the relations between China's contemporary art with other segments of the society. The market has provided a room — unimaginable in the past — for China's contemporary art to develop a practical principle based on the needs, rather than developing the cultural and ideological principles. A multitude of artists began to pilot new cultural forms in a bid to expand artistic space. In 1996, for example, Wang Jin carried out an "Ice '96" project in downtown of Zhengzhou, capital of China's Henan Province, where a commercial building had planned to promote itself through advertisement. Wang availed himself of the opportunity to subtly depict the personal benthamism as the country was shifting to a market economic system, and people's restlessness during the so-called Cultural Revolution. Beginning in 1997, Zhu Fadong had obtained fund for himself to continue his career by issuing identity cards made by himself. The activity, which had lasted for nearly two years, involved many people, including foreign ambassadors, business people, collectors, students and artists. To decide whether Zhu's behavior was for business or artistic purposes did not seem to be important. What mattered was that Zhu had achieved a balance in the market through exchanging with other people in the society. In June 1999, Zhao Bandi, another artist, began to reshape the artist's image by making advertisements for public welfare. Zhao is not a star, yet he exposes himself through ads in such public places such as subways, with an attempt to arouse surprise in the society. It is expected that such kind of surprise will help explore and develop a new culture and value. It is noteworthy that in the later stage of the 1990s, the socialization of China's contemporary art was very remarkable. It attempted to avert

value judgment by means of effectiveness. Judging from the development of the contemporary Chinese art in the recent period, one could conclude that what happened in the Chinese art circle in the whole 1990s could not be considered as a knowledge accumulation; it demonstrated the keen thirst of the changing social structure for the new cultural forms.

In the 1990s, Chinese contemporary art has experienced a substantial turn, which could be summarized as follows:

1. The artists have given up the realistic pursuit in actual life. Rather they turned to emphasize their own needs, and regarded such needs as the real starting points of the society.
2. A shift from self-disciplined pursuit of art and antisocial art to an art with direct involvement in the social life. In the 1980s, the artists came up with the artistic self-discipline in order to eliminate their dependency on the social politics. This self-discipline was promoted to a height of social revolution with anti-traditional characteristics. Artistic form became a symbol of freedom and progress. In the 1990s, however, the artists found that the self-disciplined art could not deal with the situation in the course of social development, which became more and more complicated. Therefore, they set to abandon the pursuit for self-disciplined art, and turned from spiritual transformation to social practice. Unlike the changes that happened previously, the turn was based on the aspiration for re-building subjectivity.
3. Art has returned to its role of social functions from its elite approach. During and before the 1980s, art belonged to the elite culture, and it entrusted itself with strong social responsibility of promoting aesthetic judgment and enriching people's perception. In the 1990s, however, art began to gradually define its boundary and re-establish its social status within the boundary.
4. The artists re-build individual-centered self-value.
5. The above changes are seen from within the art. Observed from the factors outside the art itself, China's market economy policies introduced in the 1992 and the high-velocity globalization accelerated the individualization orientation of the China's contemporary art. In recent years, China's market-oriented economic system has exerted its most important influence nationwide, causing readjustment in the country's social structure and order. During this course there have emerged a great number of individuals who are independent from any organization. There also has generated accordingly some theories which encourage actualization of self-value. This reflected the anxious expectation of the society on the new culture and new value with individuals at the core.

In the early 1990s, contemporary Chinese art was in a stage of straightening out its concepts. In the later period of the decade, the efforts were evolved into a social practice, which gradually became the basis for contemporary Chinese

art's subjectivity.

**Supplement: Is There a Local Art Market in China and So On?**

Although the contemporary Chinese art has made a breakthrough in finding its way into the world art cycle during its development in the past decade, it has not attracted the general public in China. On the one hand, it has become all the more eye-catching abroad, and has won a small share of the art market there. Viewed from the globalization perspective, contemporary Chinese art has become an indispensable component of the world art. On the other hand, however, there is a straining relation between contemporary Chinese art and local art market. The art has been exerting itself, through self-molding and influence from abroad, to possess forms acceptable to the local people. However, Chinese contemporary art, deemed as something pendant and difficult to grasp, has been carefully placed in an enclave. It has been very hard for contemporary Chinese art to expand its social space in China. Unfortunately it has not possessed its local public up to now. Even if there are some economic activities (art exhibitions for the commercial purpose, contemporary art auctions, etc.) in the field of contemporary Chinese art in local places, but the most participants are the foreigners who work or live in China or from overseas. In this aspect, we don't have a precise concept about the local market. Today, the fact that China's contemporary art has not forged an organic tie with the market in the native country has not deprived of its development impetus. On the contrary, put in the context of globalization, the art is full of vigor. It is not appropriate to recognize and understand the contemporary Chinese art only as the contemporary Chinese art. The contemporary Chinese art should be examined in the context of globalization.

## Sensibility of New Generation

Seo Seongrok

Professor, Andong National University

The art at the end of the century has come up in confusion. Facing the new millennium ahead, for exactly ten years, the art world in Korea has been wrapped up by the rough waves. Many things have changed in a short time with an inflow of the new information and the waves of open-door policies. At the same period as the frequent interchanges of the art shows between the countries, the advent of a new generation, the phenomenon of heated interest in installation, the expansion of the art market, and the transformation of public art, Kwangju Biennale which dealt with the artists from all over the world was conceived for the first time in Asia. It was also in the 1990s that we were able to participate in the various international art fairs and competitions.

The art world of Korea has swollen with a dream. However, here comes the trouble with the dream. It became an urgent matter for us to secure the identity of Korean art. We have to consider how our art would settle down and be valued accurately in the international art world. For this, besides the relationship with the foreign art world, the first issue is to find the way in which the identity of Korean art could be known.

Several debates have been deployed concerning this issue. The first one is to regulate Korean art according to the ethnic color and the sensibility through the vision of the third world. This issue can be seen better in Myn-Jung art. Here, being different from the high art and socially resisting, a critical message was expressed intensively. The Myn-Jung art that was stimulated in the 1980s has not been only socially recognized but also has established the political realism in Korean art world.

The second one is the tendency to transform the Korean traditional paper, which is already used as a handmade artifact, into an artwork. Korean paper artworks that were made by the contemporary artists have not been appreciated. However, those artists have found the aesthetic value of Korean paper with the aesthetic sense, and they have endeavored to expose the mild and mystic sensibility of Korean people through the texture of the material of Korean paper.

The third one is the painting of the young generation called late-monochrome generation. Many people have shown their interest in late-monochrome. Here, separating from the restrained and uniformed canvas in the 1970s, the rough material, action, and the composition of thick layers of paint are seen as advantages. Compared with stillness and

neatness in the paintings of the 1970s, roughness, rhythmical energy, and the effect of brush strokes are emphasized in the 1990s.

However, the art of the 1990s is deeply related to the characteristic utterance of the new generation. The characteristic utterance calls our attention. When this utterance comes up with the apparition of the new generation, generally, its feature can be explained as ardent self-expression, vital patterns of style, and brilliant way to perform. Raised in a consumer society and surrounded by the media, this generation gives forth the new structure of sense and experience other than that of the generation of the letters. Compared to the generation of the letters who are rational, logical, in the view of the value, inclined towards the homogeneity, also, self-controlled and self-restrained, the new generation of the media is sensual. They are inclined to follow the sensual decision, and their expression is very firm and vital. They explore their feeling at random.

The new generation sought for the freedom which we could not find in the previous example. However, there comes the question of whether they use the freedom thoughtfully. The new generation artists have enjoyed the freedom during the last ten years. Being blessed with the explosive freedom, they even did not consider others to persist in their freedom. They too much concentrated only on their own rights to be considerate to others. As a result, sensual instinct and refined rhetoric, which is good at dramatic presentation, has sprung out. However, it is this freedom that collapses with egoism, avarice, and arrogance. The freedom gained free must be sold at a slaughter price. If the freedom does not give them any profit, they should be able to alienate it generously. But they couldn't. They considered something obstructive to their freedom as burdensome or inconvenient. We might say, they have used the freedom for their self-satisfaction.

The art of the 1990s has become more reliable than that of the 1980s. It is one of the harvests that the 1990s have gathered. Also expansion of views such as feminism, cultural critique, kitsch, and new media can be good signs for the art. Instead of noticing the mainstream of the mainstream, various kinds of -isms, styles, and methodologies have flourished. Instead of infusion or slogan, the trial to grasp the real life and the real culture faithfully and lively seems to be helpful for this change.

The tendency of popularization in art dependent on slogan of aesthetic mess, cynicism, hedonism, nihilism which lost the sense of judgement, extreme egoism, drifting lacking in confidence: all of these are the styles of the art that the new generation has shown.

In closing the twentieth century and also ten years of the 1990s, what has passed unconsciously has to be examined deeply. We have to recognize honestly that the result of the Deism and the homage to the art itself that has supported the modern art is vanity, dissolution, and meaninglessness. In this

sense, we have to overcome the egoism, the avarice and the vanity. As the physical union can be beautiful when it is the expression of the true love, the union of the art, the abstract and the purity can be meaningful when it is the expression of the beauty and goodness. Furthermore, I can be sure that the art can be recovered when it is united with humanity.

Regrettably, the Korean art of the 1990s seems to have overlooked and wanted on this point.

## Discoursing in Regional Contemporary Art in Asia — The Case in Indonesia

Jim Supangkat

Art Critic

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First of all I would like to thank The Japan Foundation Asia Center for giving me the opportunity to present my opinion in this remarkable symposium, in particularly the chance to talk in this session that examines Asian contemporary art through developments in several countries during the 1990s.

It is a coincidence that it has been my interest in the last few years to observe development of contemporary art in Indonesia during the 1990s in terms of how this development was affected by regional art activities—exhibitions, symposiums, artists' exchange, workshops—that became intensive at the same decade.

The result of the observation, which I would like to share here in this forum, is the basis of my presentation. It is not just a report on a lineal development of contemporary art in Indonesia in the 1990s. It is a report on the dawning of insights in contemporary art in Indonesia as result of being involved in regional art activities. In addition, here I clearly state that I will not elaborate on the connection between Indonesia's contemporary art development in the 1990s with Asian contemporary art.

To me it is more significant to see Asian contemporary art as well as to see contemporary art in Asia-Pacific, in Central Asia or Southeast Asian contemporary art as showing a regional art activity. This is why before I go to the topic on Indonesia I feel indebted to make clear what do I mean with regional art activities, regional art forums and the emerging regional art discourse.

### Discoursing in Regional Contemporary Art

The label "regional art activities" is of course based on the common meaning of the term "region." As Apinan Poshyananda had put it into words at the previous Asia Center's symposium, "Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered," the term "region" points out various areas such as Southeast Asia, the Far East and Asia-Pacific.<sup>1</sup> However, regional art activities were at no time meant to show a certain "regional art." The selection of countries in regional exhibitions very often was arranged loosely.

Considering that tendency, regional art activities in my opinion is an opposition to the international art. Contemporary art that has been taken as the basis of nearly all curation is chosen because of its political intensity in reading modernist art and not simply for showing the living art in a region. I see this is the paradigm of the emergence of regional art forums. It

reflects shared perception on being ignored in international art forums.

What I want to emphasize out of that already-considered-simple issue is that, the tension that lies at the bottom of regional art activities is "regional-international" and not "regional-national." This intendment is significant because in many cases the thinking behind regional art activities converged on "regional-national" tension and somewhat overlooked the "regional-international" one. Apinan Poshyananda for example sees regional art as an "inter-" or "trans-" national matter where shared regional values should be and not the uniqueness within a nation state.<sup>2</sup>

What should be taken into account out of the "regional-international" phenomenon is that the intensity in sensing the contradiction varied in regional art activities. There are artists, curator, organizations, and museums' administrators who really feel the confrontation because of their direct experience of being ignored in the international art forums. They took the initiative to form regional art forums. To make the regional forums meaningful, they brought in artists from periphery areas who at the time did not have experience in international art world but can be assumed to be marginalized.

In Asia-Pacific region it is quite clear that organizations, galleries and museums in Japan and Australia were mostly the initiators in forming the Asian, or the Asia-Pacific regional art forums. Artists, curators from the rest of the countries in Asia/Asia-Pacific were the ones who were brought in.

Therefore, regional art forums are far from being homogenous in perceiving clues of contemporary art disclosed in regional activities. This condition resulted in different outgrowth that can be seen after ten years of progress. For organizers, museums and curators the constituting of regional forums has reached its target since thoughts and concepts that emerged in regional forums have been taken into account in the discourse of contemporary art in the international art world. However, for the majority in the forum, the ten years of progress is barely a start in understanding the international connection of art.

Considering the case in Indonesia, being involved in regional art activities has clearly become an enlightening process. Starting with sensing the "regional-international" confrontation in contemporary art discourse, artists came in contact with art discourses in general. The result was a clearer understanding, not just of contemporary art, but also of modern art, even of fine art tradition experienced in Indonesia — fine art tradition was somewhat "internationalized" around the eighteenth century. Art discourses that were previously hidden were raised to a level of more explicit awareness. I think this is also the case in many other Asian countries.

The appropriate term for that process is "discoursing." The term "discoursing" here points out a discourse that is still in process and could not yet be considered as discourse. On the one hand, it is a basis for a local discourse, on the other

hand, it is a regional discursive element when mediated can disclose the regional art discourse in world context.

The “discoursing” process that has local and international dimension, in my opinion, is a critical matter in regional art activities. This is actually “the” regional subject that has been overlooked — therefore should be assuredly taken into account — in contemporary art discourse in world context.

A trigger is needed to bring this local “discoursing” process to a regional level. The trigger could be a theory, set of theories or some sort of simplified map of reality. Here the paradigm of the emergence of regional art forums I have mentioned before is crucial.

At the symposium “Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered,” John Clark revealed that regional exhibitions should serve the interest of historians and critics and not only the concern of curators who very often consider the number of people who visit the exhibition as most important matter.<sup>3</sup> Asian or Asia-Pacific regional exhibitions that consider discourse-oriented criterion, I think, can serve the interest of the “brought-in” Asian artists. Unintentionally they have been seeking the position of their works in contemporary art discourse. In their respective countries where the infrastructure of art is somewhat lacking, analysis of works and historical overview very often lead to confusion.

It is a matter of fact that in Southeast Asia — probably also in many other countries in Asia — there is no education for art historians. No wonder there are only few critics, curators, art historians and nearly no theoretician in Southeast Asia. This is why theoretical and historical analysis — which is significant in the emanation of a discourse — is far from being developed.

### The Case in Indonesia

As I have mentioned before, my report on Indonesia’s contemporary art development in the 1990s is more a report on the dawning of comprehension as the outcome of being involved in regional art activities. This is particularly made apparent in a research on contemporary art in Indonesia just completed last month. The research was organized by the Cemeti Foundation based in Yogyakarta and funded by the Netherlands’ Prince Claus Fund. I was invited to conduct the research and four scholars from two most acknowledged art academies in Indonesia were asked to do four separate researches.<sup>4</sup>

In the report of the research, it is quite clear that the understanding of contemporary art among artists and critics has become extensive during the 1990s, in particular, the what and the why of contemporary art development in Indonesia. In early 1990s even the term, “contemporary art” was still confusing to most artists and critics, let alone a vision on contemporary art in Indonesia. This is what I mean with “discoursing.”

The “discoursing” is actually wider than just “discoursing” in the field of contemporary art. However, I will

limit my presentation on contemporary art only. On the one hand, this presentation reflects the shared understanding on contemporary art in Indonesia, on the other hand, it is somewhat a “fine tuning” of my visions sporadically presented in several symposiums before.

The birth of contemporary art in Indonesia is agreed to have occurred in 1975 with the emergence of Indonesian New Art Movement.<sup>5</sup> Evident in its manifesto stated in 1979 this movement rejected fine art paradigm, universalism and the search of national identity. However, in the reading of this movement today, its anti-universalism is considered as an opposition to the universalizing influence of Western art and not criticism towards universalism as a fundamental premise of modernist belief. In line with this, contemporary art that subsequently emerged contradicts to modernism, as far as modernism is considered in its original understanding, that is “a great dream of industrial capitalism, an idealistic ideology which placed its faith in progress and sought to create new order.”<sup>6</sup>

Contemporary art in Indonesia also shows representational tendency that is somewhat political. It is indeed an opposition towards modern art development. However the opposition is not at all a reaction to ideas concerning purity of form, professionalism, essentialism, linear historicism, genealogy of artists, and so on.

In a closer look it is apparent that the concerns reflected in the manifesto of the movement was actually a reaction to the “depoliticization” of artistic development in Indonesia. This “depoliticization” was related to the political changes in 1965 when the military took charge after Indonesian Communist Party failed to gain control. The subsequent “intimidation politics” deployed in order to ward off communism had made the community — including artists — became afraid to engage in political activities. Within this political condition, a group of artists in the city of Bandung who had been committed to a kind of formalism suddenly became well known. Meanwhile another group of artists in the city of Yogyakarta came up with decorative tendency that meant to search national identity. Both inclinations tend to evade socio-political themes.

Despite the fear that the New Art Movement did not pursue political opposition, the works were political in the sense they attempted to create an impact. The works that have taken the form of installations and used ready-mades, found-objects indeed received reactions and invited controversy.

In today’s reading, that attitude is seen as showing apprehension that the practice of formalism and decorativism will make Indonesian art esoteric. The reaction — somewhat recommended representational tendency — is also interpreted as based on the discernment that the bottom line of Indonesian modern art seen since early twentieth century is a moralistic inclination that tend to defend the people. In the beginning, it was a struggle against colonialism. The

subsequent fight was against governments because all governments after Indonesia's independence have been using power to conduct the state.

In the mid-1980s the government became suspicious towards political works, especially the ones that showed social commentary. Several young artists in Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta were captured due their activities. As reaction, since the mid-1980s contemporary art in Indonesia have tended to show political opposition. Most of the works criticized Suharto's government.

At the time, the government, controlled by military and technocrats who called themselves new order government, pursued industrialization with the help of multinational investment. This Suharto's regime, on the one hand, is ultra-nationalistic, on the other hand, however, is submissive in terms of constituting international economic policies. The regime uses repressive approaches in gaining lands, changing traditions and safeguarding the industrialization process. Political stability perceived as requirement for investment was utilized as reason to carry out power.

Suharto's regime reflects a symbiosis of nationalistic heroism and international capitalism that aimed to bring the old great dream of industrial capitalism into reality. This mutual reliance that can also be found in many other Asian countries, somewhat shows an "Asian Modernism," an idealistic ideology that believes not only in absolutism, functional specialization, calculability, exactness, metropolitanism, market mechanism and social engineering, but also in violence in "fabricating" progress. In many Asian countries, the great dream of Western industrial capitalism resulted in nightmares.

### **Paradoxical Development of the 1990s**

Business world, which had developed rapidly since the 1980s, put on display the glory of industrial capitalism in early 1990s. This development gave rise to a "tradition" of art collecting among wealthy business tycoons and wealthy corrupt government officials. A painting boom ensued. Generally it was those beautiful paintings that were most prized. Within a short time art galleries in big cities had grown in number from only few to hundreds. Auction halls established in Singapore auctioned mostly Indonesian paintings in fantastic high prices.

While "beautiful paintings" have found its position in the art market, contemporary art found a niche in regional contemporary art exhibitions at nearly the same time. This is a fragment of the growth of regional art forums in early 1990s I have described before.

Therefore entering the 1990s, art in Indonesia has faced paradoxical developments. The two developments are commercialization and internationalization. This is the first time, since Indonesian modern art emerged in the beginning of twentieth century, Indonesian art has been internationalized and highly commercialized. More or less the contradictive

development reflects Indonesia's encounter with global developments today.

Confrontation between those two developments is a matter of course. The "beautiful paintings" continued the search of national identity and were praised by government dignitaries who saw the tendency as nationalistic. Due to this official adjustment, exhibitions of "beautiful paintings" held mostly at luxury hotels' lobbies had grown into a social gathering of wealthy businessmen and corrupt government officials who somehow celebrated the "success" of Suharto's regime. Meanwhile, critical contemporary artworks that had the opportunity to be exhibited abroad kept criticizing the government, Suharto and the erratic economical development as well.

That tension between the two developments provided a reading on why contemporary artists have been critical toward the search of national identity since the mid-1970s. The contemporary young artists were in opinion that it is not the elite group in the society (intellectuals, scholars of culture, artists) who determines Indonesia's identity. It is not nationalism that should be taken as the basis of national identity. To these artists it is the social identity of the majority — poor, traditional, uneducated in the Western sense, determined losers and marginalized — that should be taken into account in seeing Indonesia's identity.

In the late 1990s corruption, collusion and nepotism within the government had reached its intolerable stage. At the end of 1997 when monetary crisis whipped up Asia — and showed the bankruptcy of "Asian Modernism" — Indonesia was among the countries that faced serious economical difficulties. Corruption in fact was the ground why the government failed to overcome the worsening economical problems. This failure gave birth to anti-government protests in early 1998. Subsequently, around March 1998 students, government critics and scholars in nearly all cities in Indonesia took the streets demanding a political reform.

Forced especially by the rallies, Suharto resigned in May 1998 after thirty-two years in power. Political change immediately appeared in Indonesia. Cases of corruption and collusion were openly publicized in mass media after been untouchable for two decades.

Contemporary artists in Bandung and Yogyakarta who had been criticizing Suharto for more than ten years, no doubt took part in the movement for political reform. They did their works — mostly installation and performance art — among the rallies and in public spaces. However, the artists' close relation with politics, as I witnessed, resulted in somewhat a lack of confidence.

Between June and July 1998, I made a trip to big cities in Java and Bali and was stunned to find artists who had an opinion that art is nothing compared with politics, that the people do not need art except when art becomes the tool of

politics. In Yogyakarta I was told that artists who gathered at the Cemeti Contemporary Art Gallery were attacked due to their absence in the rallies. I was again shocked to know that the accused artists felt guilty and had stated apologies openly for their "lack." Back home I wrote my opinions. I criticized artists openly in newspapers for losing confidence. I stated that I did not see anything significant in their works among the rallies and in public spaces, aesthetically nor politically.

The "politicization" of art due to the political change is phenomenal. In subsequent discussions on this matter, I got the impression that artists see the political reform as an opportunity to make a breakthrough. They expect their works that have been political in the art world to become political in the political world too. For this purpose, they unintentionally revoked aesthetic aspects in their works. I think this is why they failed in mobilizing art for political ends. Taking into account Walter Benjamin's argument that says, "it is impossible for a work to be politically correct unless it is also aesthetically correct,"<sup>7</sup> their works have become somewhat "politically incorrect." The works and the art events indeed got only minor publicity, let alone impact.

The "politicization" of art has continued until now. A group of artists in Yogyakarta who called themselves "Taring Padi" stated that they were part of Democratic People's Party, a small party founded by radical socialist young politicians. Their commitment to oppositional politics is quite apparent in their works. They also continued the allegation against art world. Cemeti Contemporary Art Gallery was again attacked and considered colonialist only because Mella Jaarsma, one of the founders, is of Dutch origin. This is of course ridiculous.

At the end of 1998, the House of Representatives decided to conduct a general election and a presidential election. Due to the political reform, the parties have grown in number from only three to forty-eight. In the campaign for the general election early this year, political groups started fighting to each other. Although the general election was meant to elect representatives of parties in House of Representatives, nearly all of the party leaders prematurely campaigned for presidential seat and forced their followers to make political pressure. This constraint very often resulted in clash and unrest. Within this condition, the term, "political elite" has become popular in the sense that people have started to understand that there is always a distance between politician's widely publicized opinion and the real demands of the people. There is a doubt on the practice of democracy in Indonesia.

That reality is reflected in the works of younger contemporary art artists shown at the Yogya Biennial held early this year, especially the ones who just emerged in the 1990s. Representation in the works shows a shift from political idealism to cultural representation. The works show dynamic representation that is critical of all dominant representations. The works somewhat criticize the political stereotype that has

its origin in the perceptions of the political elite and the newly emerged political opposition. Their works show a trend away from installation and a return to two-dimensional media. A revitalization of expressive painting occurred and gave life to "symbolization" tendency. Narrative drawings densely packed with metaphor have also occurred.

More or less this tendency is affected by discussions on representation in art that have become extensive in the last few years. In this converse it is predicted that cultural representation that show shared values in Indonesia is probably the most significant matter in work of art in Indonesia. Since the emergence of contemporary art in the mid-1970s there were indicators that showed efforts among artists to find a way to transmit their opinions directly to the people — due to the lack of infrastructure of art. There are possibilities that the inclination is not really a desire to communicate, but a drive to express shared values.

In the latest development, it is clear that artists tend to work somewhat like designers at advertisement agency. They mobilize popular symbols and use cultural codes but without an intended message. Here artists produce cultural/social signs that need to be signified or symbolic expressions that become open texts. In addition, this brings to a close to the chapter on the most recent developments in contemporary art in Indonesia.

#### Notes:

1. *Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered*, Symposium papers, The Japan Foundation Asia Center, 1997, p.107.
2. Ibid.
3. *Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered Report*, The Japan Foundation Asia Center, 1998, p.166.
4. The four scholars are: Sumartono, Dwi Marianto (lecturers at the Faculty of Fine Arts & Design, Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta), Asmujo J. Irianto, Rizki Zaelani (lecturers at the Faculty of Fine Arts & Design, Bandung Institute of Technology).
5. Comprehensive information about this movement is detailed in Brita L. Miklouho-Maklai's book, *Exposing the Society's Wound? Some Aspects of Contemporary Indonesian Art Since 1966*, Asian Studies Flinders University, Adelaide, 1991.
6. Brian Wallis mentioned it in his essay, "What's Wrong with this Picture? An Introduction" in *Art after Modernism, Rethinking Representation*. Wallis, Brian (et al., ed.), The Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1992, p.xii.
7. Quoted by Janet Wolff in her book, *Aesthetics and the Sociology of Art*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1983, p.63.

## Back to the World: Anxiety and Exhilaration in Contemporary Indian Art

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It might be argued that Indian artists have increasingly turned, over the 1990s, to an array of art practices that may collectively be described as “kaleidoscopic realism.” While the spectral machines of national allegory and spiritual abstractionism continue to remain active in the background, younger artists have opened out new domains of experience and expression for themselves. These artists include Atul Dodiya, Jitish Kallat, Sudarshan Shetty, Baiju Parthan, Tushar Joag and Kausik Mukhopadhyay. They conceive of the artist as an inventor of identities: to them, the artist is not a genius who operates from a hereditary self-identity, but a montageur who fashions identities from the flux of history. There is a pragmatic approach to an environment that offers them a seductively manifold range of stimuli. While they do not consciously view themselves as an avant-garde, it is clear that their image-making practices are, for the most part, postmodernist. Rejoicing in interactivity and intertextuality, these artworks draw on an intriguing gamut of concerns and formal techniques.

“Kaleidoscopic realism” emerges, without doubt, at the interface between the local and the global — with the ideological and aesthetic issues that emerge from national history arrayed on one side, and the modes and opportunities of the new artistic internationalism arrayed on the other. The key issue here may be described, in Alan Bloom’s apt phrase, as the “anxiety of influence”: is internationalism always a vertical export handed down from the First World to the Third World; or can we achieve a lateral internationalism in which societies and cultures may interact freely with one another, learning and internalising patterns of thought and art in a condition of free exchange? These are some of the themes that exercise the realm of contemporary Indian art.

The current crisis in Indian Art, therefore, is one in which artists have been polarized between two opposite imperatives. These imperatives take the form, in practice, of two opposed idioms of art practice: a cosmopolitanism of concern, look and style on the one hand; and a deliberate, inward-turning recovery of the native on the other. This binary aspect of the present moment in India’s cultural history calls for some investigation of the history of internationalism in Indian art — and specifically, of the role it has played, not only as a form of practice, but also as an attitude of self-representation.

Internationalism, properly conceived, does not describe the general processes of cultural diffusion across the relatively

osmotic boundaries of premodern societies. Rather, it denotes a deliberate and self-conscious attitude nurtured by individual artists (or groups of artists) in modern societies; for the concept of internationalism could scarcely emerge without the exclusionary logic of a hard international border to contend against. Indeed, it is the presence — even the obtrusive ideological presence of the nation — state that gives “internationalism” in art its principal impetus as a desire to transcend the circumstances of space, time and identity.

This attitude commits its proponents to certain Utopian-Romantic assumptions. Artists who see themselves as “internationalist” are united by their sense of membership in an avant-garde, a global elite whose art practice is in advance of conventional idioms, and whose language of ideas and images cuts across cultures. We hear a resonance of the *Familiengespraech* here, the family argot that bound the German Romantics in their defiance of bourgeois society. It is this self-conscious perception of being in the vanguard that imbues internationalism with its fundamental characteristic: a contemptuous impatience with provincialism, and a corresponding aspiration to embrace a cosmopolitan sensibility. Premised as it is on a linear model of progress in art history, internationalism assumes that its approach to art is the only historically valid one at any given point — by this token, any artist who wishes to remain at the leading edge of “progress” in art must keep up with the international avant-garde, lest she/he be relegated to a siding or shunted aside to make way for the express trains of progress.

The Utopian impulse and the anxiety of acceptance are intertwined in the internationalist agenda; in any case, all interaction among cultures is anchored in the interaction among the political systems to which they are related. The emancipatory possibilities of internationalism must, therefore, be weighed over against the asymmetries that determine the power relations between the world’s industrially developed and industrially underdeveloped nations. For internationalism, as we have pictured it here, typically flows from the influential centers of global art to the recipients at the periphery, from “First World” to “Third World” societies. In consequence, the avant-gardisme of internationalism can lose its subversive energy and manifest itself as an obsession, among “Third World” artists, to re-invent themselves constantly. By the same token, the quest for a common cosmopolitan language may degenerate, among “Third World” artists, into a simple acquiescence in a generic vocabulary legislated by their “First World” exemplars. Finally, the urge to shed one’s provincialism and transform oneself into a cosmopolitan figure may itself lead a “Third World” artist into the ultimate sin of the provincial, that of derivativeness.

All these perils were identified by Geeta Kapur in a trenchant essay written twenty-seven years ago, and her caveat retains its relevance. “My point of view, stated in simple terms, is that Internationalism, as a cult, imposes upon

the individual artist and especially one outside the Western metropolis, a set of false assumptions and imperatives," she wrote in "Implications of Internationalism in Contemporary Art" (a section of her study, "In Quest of Identity," *Vrishchik* 3, Nos. 6-7; April-May 1972). She went on to castigate international exhibitions as "arenas where different nations test their respective advancement — the under-developed ones with some anxiety, following the criteria of advanced art, set by the galleries and critics of the progressive West."

In retrospect, it seems obvious that the pivotal character in the story of internationalism as an attitude in the history of modern Indian art was Gaganendranath Tagore, whose concern with Cubism and Futurism catapulted him from the late, inward-looking phase of the Tagore circle and into the arena of European art activity. This move could be read both as an attempt to overcome the parochialism that had crept into the aesthetic of the Tagore circle, and as a transgression of the Anglocentric parameters of vision laid down by the British colonial system. The establishment of the Progressive Artists Group in Bombay, in the late 1940s, is arguably the next point of nodal importance in this narrative. Subscribing as they did to a School-of-Paris modernism, the Progressives proposed a theoretical opposition to the indigenously achieved modernism of the Tagore circle and the Santiniketan artists; ironically, however, their paintings continued to be coded with references to the work of these precursors and contemporaries. Janus-faced, the Progressives set the tone for many of their successors: they occupied an uncertain ground, charmed by the attractions of internationalism and yet sensitive to the need for a local contemporary idiom.

This Janus-faced approach also characterized the ideology of J. Swaminathan, who — in the manifesto of Group 1890, which he founded in 1962 — denounced the established artists of the time as epicene followers of an irrelevant Western agenda. Intriguingly, his own thought and painting in those years (the former advocating the primacy of a full-bodied, primitive perception; the latter distinguished by its intense, radiant planing of color) bore the unmistakable franchise of Rothko, Newman & Co., Ltd. It was only in the 1970s, in Baroda, that the idea of an art that could forge linkages with international art movements without traducing its own history came vividly to fruition in the paintings of Gulammohammed Sheikh, Bhupen Khakhar, Vivan Sundaram and their associates (Sundaram, incidentally, took fierce issue with Kapur's caveat through the columns of *Vrishchik*, asserting the "revolutionary" potential of internationalism).

Gradually, a radical shift of mood and stance has taken place among Indian artists on the subject. Since the early 1990s, the insecurity over cultural autonomy has yielded place to a preoccupation with the opportunities that globalization provides for the extension of consciousness. This shift has produced its own genre of unease, which manifests itself in the

principal questions that haunt the debate today: given that it is chiefly "First World" curators who present "Third World" art in an international context, how precisely is our art refracted? Are the patterns of Indian art to be determined by the biases of conquistador scholars, tourist curators and their native informants? Can Indian art find legitimacy and confidence only if it receives a testimonial from the international art circuit? Is there not a very real danger that contemporary Indian artists may feel compelled to subtly (or not so subtly) modify their art practice to suit the curatorial norms and expectations of the "First World"?

These questions take us into the heart of the problem. Who decides who should get a place at the front of the train, or what is "International" and what is not? A clue to the international cultural dynamics of the issue is to be found in a telling observation that Timothy Hyman makes towards the conclusion of his rewarding and empathetic study of one of India's most inventive and resourceful painters (*Bhupen Khakhar*, 1998): "Westerners easily spring upon Indian artists a terrible trap, a cultural double bind. We make of them two contradictory demands. First — 'Why aren't you more modern?' (that is, more in sync with the Western avant-garde). But then, as it were in the same breath: 'Why aren't you more Indian?' (that is, How dare you be...)" Hyman argues that Khakhar can position his art in a variety of deceptive ways, seeming both "naïve" and "local" as well as sophisticated and comprehensible to Western viewers on their own terms. To address the deception in another terminology (that of Homi K. Bhabha), Khakhar's paintings function as hybrid signs.

A personal note may not be out of place in this discussion, since the strategy of hybridity was the leitmotif of "Private Languages," an exhibition that the present writer curated for the Pundole Art Gallery, Bombay, in January 1997. Of the three artists whose works made up this show — Ravinder G. Reddy, Sudarshan Shetty and Anandajit Ray — the first had already attained a measure of international recognition within the format of a "news from the Third World" curatorship, and the second was soon to find a place in that schema. It is not difficult to see how their accomplished hybrid signs can operate around the Hymanian trap and compel international attention: Reddy's sculptures play off kitsch and sacred art in a way that is both postmodern in intent and vernacular in look; Shetty's assemblages, balancing between sculpture and theater, draw their imagery from the arcades of metropolitan India. But curiously enough (as this native informant knows), Ray has been repeatedly passed over by international curators. Although his scintillating techniques (including a combination of color Xerox and illusionistic painting, the venerated logic of the original punctured by the reality of replication technology) should work in his favor, Ray's basic devotion to the painted surface disqualifies him on the one hand; and the fact that his violent imagery fuses Hollywood with science-fiction renders him suspect on the other. The

ghost of a meaningless dichotomy bars his way in the world, for he is too "Indian" to be "modern" in one sense, and too "modern" to be "Indian" in another. Similarly, it is Atul Dodiya's refusal to abandon the easel painting — while embracing the preoccupations of the Conceptual artist — that appears to have led to his exclusion from a forthcoming international exhibition of considerable prestige. This, despite his stated position that an easel painter can contest the installer's monopoly over Conceptualism, as exemplified in the ambitious suite of paintings he exhibited at the Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi, over March 1999.

The internationalism that we have discussed here is a vertical, neo-colonial process, with descriptive authority flowing downwards from apex to base, and confirming / conforming responses routed back upwards. Even as they negotiate the global circuits of capital, power and interpretation, Indian artists today will find themselves confronted by despair and cynicism, and by the temptation to perform for would-be foreign patrons. And yet the heartening fact is that many of them still keep alive the hope of a lateral internationalism, in which a genuine cross-fertilization can take place among artists who engage one another in dialog as artists, rather than as envoys of the nations or cultures to which they happen to belong.

**MC (Miki Akiko):** In Session I, we had participants from China, Korea, Indonesia, and India talk about the arts activities during the 1990s in their respective countries in relation to the international art scene. It goes without saying that the examples from these four nations are not sufficient to describe the entire scope of the development and evolution of Asian art in the past decade. Nor can we expect the speakers to be able to introduce a comprehensive picture of the situation in their twenty-minute presentation.

Under the circumstances, we asked the speakers to sum up and analyze the 1990s from their own perspective. This has given us an opportunity to review some of the achievements in each area and given us a better understanding of some of the problem.

Now I would like to start the discussion session. I believe there are many questions and comments concerning the four presentations. We have invited commentators to join the panel for our discussion.

I would first like to invite the commentators to speak. May we have Mr. Shimizu, please.

**Shimizu Toshio:** From my experience in following the Chinese artists and their works, I agree with Mr. Leng Lin's view that following the years after the Tian'anmen Square Incident, individual narratives have been increasingly addressed in art rather than trying to trace the idealistic or the social stories and narratives.

In 1996, for example, at the First Shanghai Biennale, Chinese oil painters were the only types of artists featured, but the vast majority of them traced and explored very private mindscapes in their works. It was quite a significant change to see such works being exhibited in a public space.

By the mid-1990s, cutting-edge artists who had explored social issues in the 1970s had turned to exploring personal issues. In this case, not only did the artists who appeared in public venues turn to personal narratives, but the cutting-edge artists also started to tell their personal stories in a more radical way. But, recently, the relationship between art and society is what artists are interested in.

For example, in the "Supermarket" show in Shanghai this year, young artists were selling their works through a system similar to a supermarket. However, an exhibition held in Beijing called "Post-sensibility" featured artists who had a desire to establish links with the society but were, in fact, estranged from the public.

In contemporary China with its rapidly changing environment, the public must be seeking artistic expressions that are in tune with their reality. Because such expressions or media are not available, movement like Falun Gong can gain popularity. How can art meet the needs of the Chinese public?

In my view, art is not meeting the needs of the public in a good way. I would like to hear your opinion.

**Leng Lin:** I think, in 1995 and 1996, we saw the changes that you pointed out in Chinese contemporary art. At the same time, as I mentioned in my presentation, while we saw this movement towards socialization, we also had this direction of individualization, different from that of the desire for self-expression in the previous years. This individualization is backed by a very pragmatic element. For example, the Shanghai exhibition that you just spoke about was an attempt to promote communication between art and the ordinary audience. We have yet to see or conclude whether this communication has succeeded or not.

However, there is an evident tendency towards individuality and its supporting pragmatic elements. What I mean by this is that the artists were looking at their own existence and position in society at large. This is a different trend from the 1980s.

For example, in Beijing there is an artist whose activities are guerilla-like, putting graffiti-like drawings in different parts of the city. Although such activities involve legal issues, this artist has not been apprehended by the authorities so far, and his works, in a way, deal with the legal boundaries or zones. For example, he stops at the point where he might be penalized for his actions or be arrested by the authorities when he creates his works. He is the type of artist whose act of wandering near the boundary becomes a work of art.

Initially, his graffiti did not attract much attention, but having continued this activity for several years, there are now approximately 1,000 instances of graffiti in different places around Beijing, and the sheer number is drawing a response from the citizens. This is also an example that can be seen as an attempt or, rather, as means of communication in the 1990s.

I would also like to talk about Zhao Bandi whose work appeared in June this year in a series of advertisements with his self-portrait in the subway of Beijing. The Beijing subway had not gained as much commercial success as that of Shanghai, and the city authorities were looking for ways to succeed in this commercial venture. This happened to coincide with Zhao Bandi's idea. He made ads which promoted giving up smoking, aiding redundant workers, and preventing AIDS. In these works, he added photographs of himself. So, he has been able to gain support from the state while promoting his own artistic activity. This activity actually has had a certain amount of impact on society.

Such attempts as these are different from those of the artists of the 1980s, who tried to retain a position and exercise their influence only within art circles. In the 1990s, artists are trying to create a public space, which is intertwined with certain institutional structures and relationships.

In the 1980s, we saw artists trying to escape the indoors and take their actions outside, but as I look back, I think that

their performances or installations were not much different from those that used to be exhibited indoors.

In the 1990s, we see some artists who are exploring the use of public space and ways to express their relationship to the institution and their position within that structure through their art. This is a new trend.

The new direction in which artists explore individuality has emerged as something that transcends the relationship or the opposition between the traditional and the modern, or the framework of confrontation between China and the West. This new trend takes a practical approach and does not consider theoretical issues such as post-colonialism to be germane to artistic practice.

**MC (A. Miki):** In your paper, you mention how the present Chinese contemporary art scene experienced a drastic change in becoming part of the global art circuit, while artists tried to attain a uniquely Chinese style. You also state that in the eyes of the Chinese people, artists produce art that seemed un-Chinese in China, and the audience or the market has not responded to this art scene.

I have a few questions related to this phenomenon. You seem to have implied that the artists' works contain images that respond to the expectations of the international community. For instance, this year we saw many works by the Chinese artists at the Venice Biennale. How was this situation perceived within China? Furthermore, while the Chinese artists seem to be sensitive to the demands of the art world and have the ability to produce suitable products to meet such market demands, the curators and organizers in Europe seem to use this foreign culture to suit their own convenience without any consistent policy. What is the response to such views in China?

**L. Leng:** At the present moment in China, the art market for the artists themselves is at a very desirable level. It does not mean that the Chinese market is supporting the artists. It is not necessarily doing so, but the artists are now able to present their works to the international community and send them abroad.

Of course, the Chinese artists may be very good at responding to the demands and requests of the curators from abroad, and that may be a fact. Focusing on this point alone, the phenomenon involves many issues.

But at the same time, we should be aware that from the end of the 1980s to the 1990s, due to the changes in the Chinese art world, Chinese artists have started to present their works within Chinese society. This is important for the artists in establishing their identity.

This can be understood by comparing the artists in the 1980s and the 1990s. In the 1980s, the artists' main objective was to search for aesthetic or philosophical meaning. In comparison, the artists in the 1990s have pursued a path in

which they look for their position in society through their works.

I believe that this new phenomenon can lead to developing new prospects. Not only does it enable artists to position themselves in the Western world but, if the situation develops favorably, they will be able to gain a position in the Chinese market through their works.

**MC (A. Miki):** Now I would like to have Mr. Ushiroshoji comment on the presentation on Korea.

**Ushiroshoji Masahiro:** I am Ushiroshoji Masahiro from the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. We organized two major exhibitions of Asian art at my museum. One of them was the Fourth Asian Art Show in 1994 entitled, "Realism as an Attitude." In this exhibition, we presented works of artists who expressed their attitudes toward the reality of their social environment at a personal level as well as a socio-economical level.

This year, as the inaugural exhibition for the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, we held the First Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale 1999 on the theme, "Communication: Channels for Hope." The exhibition focused on the question of how taking an interest in reality can motivate and actually prompt a creative way of communication with real society.

Consequently, I share the awareness of this issue held by the first three speakers. Mr. Leng also touched on a similar point in his comment.

Mr. Seo introduced the trends of Korean art in the 1990s and described the emergence of a new generation of artists who express their views of social reality. He was quite critical of them, and described them as egoistic or self-centered.

Since specific names were not mentioned and slides were not shown to describe specific examples of such works, I would like to ask Mr. Seo to comment on them again, this time on the positive aspects of this generation. Another point I would like to ask about the economic climate and the arts. I believe that Korea is currently facing economic crisis. I wonder how artistic expressions that flourished during the materialistic bubble economy have changed under current conditions.

**Seo Seongrok:** Thank you for the comment. I apologize for not being able to show slides of the artworks representing the new generation.

The difference between the artists of the new generation and those of the 1970s and 1980s is that the older generation produced work that was orderly and formal, whereas, in the 1990s, the artists are more sensitive and more personally involved in the way they express themselves.

I do not believe that the issue is whether one generation is better than the other. What artists were pursuing in the 1970s and 1980s is probably different from what they are pursuing in the 1990s. The positive aspect of the new generation is that

they are not caught up with formality. They have made art more open, closer to the public, and more popular.

For the new generation artists, the most important thing is how people look at them, in other words, outward appearance. A great value is placed in this. Also, ideas are considered important.

I would like to say something about what art is. My personal idea is that art is something that one appreciates and also something that gives the audience a pure and beautiful experience.

Contemporary art is very difficult to interpret, and even experts face difficulties defining it. Theories concerning contemporary art have developed to a very high level today. And perhaps that is what contemporary art has pursued. But for the audience to actively participate in art, artists must recognize the public as a partner.

I will be very brief in answering your second point. Art has been affected by the recession. But recently, we are seeing some recovery. Korean industries in general have faced a difficult period, but the art world has gained some benefits.

The positive aspect is that, although contemporary art in Korea has become increasingly commercial, and drawing a line between a businessman and an artist has become difficult as capitalism has become more prevalent, the bursting of the economic bubble gave artists an opportunity to think about art again and what they can do in order to contribute to society. The bubble economy prompted them to think, but we do not want to go through such an experience that often.

**MC (A. Miki):** Thank you.

I would also like to invite one more comment on Korea from Mr. Elliott. Mr. Elliott stopped by in Korea before coming to Tokyo. Do you have any questions or comments concerning the presentation?

**David Elliott:** Not so many questions, just a comment. I had not visited Korea before, so it was my first time. In no way do I pretend to be an expert. I spent just five days looking at artists' work and I had asked to see particularly younger artists who had been emerging in the 1990s. The previous speaker described a decline in Korean art; he made it very clear he really felt it had somehow lost power. I entered Korea rather ignorant of its history. I have seen, of course, examples of work by Korean artists in international shows and also have received many catalogues. But it is not the same as being there and feeling for oneself the context and pulse that makes up the contemporary art scene, the discourse on contemporary art.

I was rather pleasantly surprised. This is absolutely a frank comment and I do not say it to contradict the previous speaker. I was pleasantly surprised particularly by the younger artists, because it seems to me they had both been looking out of their own situation and also looking into it. Everyone talks about the

end of the financial bubble and the catastrophic effect this has had within the culture itself. But I guess it is also a kind of shaking up that made these people look outside and want to participate in something bigger than the purely local scene. I do not see this as a bad thing. I do not think that the relation to the West is one that is a master-to-slave relationship. It is more an opening up and actually participating in a wider discussion while not losing one's own sense of identity. I was struck by the artists in their late twenties and early thirties who had studied outside of Korea for part of their careers, in the United States, both on the West and East Coast, even in London, Bremen and Paris, too. This has facilitated other discussions and other debates. Knowledge of what other artists are doing in other places had informed and added to what they are able to do now. I was also impressed by a large number of effective and strong women artists which seemed a contrast with the previous generation. I have no way of knowing whether the group I saw was absolutely typical, except that it was filtered by a very respected curator working in Korea. As far as I was concerned, it was an extremely positive experience.

**MC (A. Miki):** Now I would like to receive comments on Indonesia from Mr. Shioda, please.

**Shioda Junichi:** I am Shioda Junichi from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. The presentation by Mr. Supangkat was very dense with a lot of information.

In the presentation, "Discursing in Regional Contemporary Art in Asia," — the title being a very ambitious one — two major topics were covered: one, the issue of discursing and two, the Indonesian art scene from the "New Art Movement" on. I would like to organize my thoughts and ask some questions on these topics.

First of all, on regional exhibitions, you were probably referring to exhibitions such as the Fukuoka Art Museum's Asian Art Show, Fukuoka and Queensland Art Gallery's Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT) in Brisbane. In these cases, Australia and Japan, two of the more economically advantaged countries, curated or organized exhibitions of art from the Asian region and asked countries in the peripheral regions, such as Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, or Malaysia to participate. The problems involved in the selection process led by the organizers and curators in these cases are probably related to the issue of curation, which has been previously pointed out by Dr. Poshyananda in the same context. The point was made that organizers and curators should have a formal discourse. Also, these regional exhibitions do influence the artists of the participating countries, as they function like a catalyst. For example, the works, first appreciated and shown in Indonesia, can be now presented in a larger area, exposing them to the gaze of "others." Through this process of exposure, Indonesian artists

can start looking at themselves objectively and define themselves.

I think that you found this process of discoursing very important. How and in what form did the discourse develop in Indonesia? How has it affected art? This is my first question.

Also, I would like to touch on another point concerning the New Art Movement in Indonesia and the subsequent movements. Mr. Supangkat said that contemporary art in Indonesia started with the New Art Movement in the late 1970s. The political and ethical implications of the movement were critical of universalism. This trend was inherited by Indonesian artists throughout the 1980s and 1990s. How did this trend change in 1997 or 1998, during the tumultuous political events around the time Suharto stepped down?

Mr. Supangkat, you said there were not many works with political context or message that could be appreciated during that time. Meanwhile, I have heard that very important artists in Indonesia have left the country. Dadang Christanto, for instance, has immigrated to Australia. The painter, Semsar Siahaan, who was active in radical political activities, also has immigrated to Canada. What does this imply?

**Jim Supangkat:** The term "discoursing" indeed should be explained through the discoursing process in countries like Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia. I am sure the process is happening in these countries, yet the discoursing process has been overlooked and thus I see the need to bring it to a level of awareness that makes it more open for discussion.

To answer Mr. Shioda's question, yes, the discoursing process as result of involvement in regional exhibitions is indeed quite evident in Indonesia. Let me describe this matter with examples.

In 1993, contemporary art in Indonesia was still not clearly understood. This was evident when the Ninth Jakarta Biennial of Contemporary Art took contemporary art as its theme. Debates and polemics following the Biennial showed that there was no understanding of contemporary art at that time. Critics and artists questioned and even refused to consider installations exhibited at the Biennial as works of art. The radicality of the installations was heavily criticized and accused of showing anarchy. Although artists like Heri Dono, Dadang Christanto and Harsono were showing their works at the Biennial, because they already had experience in regional exhibitions, Harsono, for example, criticized the Biennial openly in the mass media and questioned the term installation. All of this criticism was a surprising phenomenon, since the installation and other incipient forms of contemporary art already existed in 1975.

In fact, understanding of contemporary art improved after more Indonesian artists were included in regional exhibitions. Through these artists and curators like me, who were included in regional art forums, theories, and art discourses discussed

in regional art forums, spread out among artists and critics in Indonesia. The art world in Indonesia became more aware of the impact of international exhibitions. Only a few years after the controversy of the Ninth Biennial articles, reviews on contemporary art began to emerge in the mass media and, as a result, contemporary art discourse became more familiar. Through this process, the art world in Indonesia began to realize that signs of contemporary art were already present in 1975 in exhibitions organized by the Indonesian New Art Movement. We can see here that there is a time gap between the emergence of contemporary art and the understanding of contemporary art in Indonesia.

There were discussions on whether it makes sense to state that contemporary art already existed in Indonesia in 1975. Does it make sense to say that artists at that time created installations without knowing contemporary art or even knowing the term "installation"? Nevertheless, as I have mentioned in my presentation, there is evidence to identify the Indonesian New Art Movement as the point where contemporary art emerged in Indonesia. The manifesto of this movement clearly contains paradigmatic ideas of contemporary art, for example, anti-universalism and a critique of the paradigm of fine art. The exhibition introduced mixed media, the use of ready-mades and found objects as well as installations. Although this point has been accepted to some extent, discussions and debates on this matter continue up until now, and I think it is still too early to conclude that a discourse of contemporary art already existed in Indonesia then. Nevertheless, the belief that contemporary art could have emerged in 1975 in Indonesia is now widespread. The research done by the four scholars I mentioned in my presentation is a strong indicator of this. More than just identifying the emergence of contemporary art in Indonesia, the four studies, which were carried out separately, share the view that there is a contradiction between the contemporary art that emerged in 1975 and previous developments. Other components involved in creating the concept of Indonesian contemporary art, or an Indonesian type of contemporary art were touched upon in the research. The "internationalization" of Indonesian art through regional forums in the 1990s is particularly mentioned in the research.

As I have mentioned in my presentation, the process of understanding contemporary art led to discussions of other matters in art development in Indonesia. Among other things, these discussions touched on an awareness of the fine art paradigm that has been taken for granted and principles of modern art that are apparent in Indonesian art development. All of this process of understanding is a clear example of the discoursing process.

I totally agree with you Mr. Shioda that a socio-political dimension has appeared continuously in contemporary art in Indonesia. Nevertheless, it is wrong to see a specifically socio-political dimension in contemporary artworks. There is no

tradition of political opposition in the sense of opposing the government. What can be seen as tradition in contemporary art in Indonesia, as well as other Indonesian art, is moralistic criticism toward a dominant power that tends to repress the people. Thus sometimes it is not relevant to analyze social commentary in contemporary artworks as opposition to the government. The side taken in the social commentary in contemporary artworks in Indonesia is continually shifting; artists do not always agree with the opinions of government critics.

As I mentioned in my presentation, the socio-political dimension of the New Art Movement did not show direct political opposition. Nevertheless, in the contemporary art of the 1980s, social commentary clearly showed criticism toward the government because Suharto's regime had become more repressive. Artists even joined political groups that continuously criticized the government and the people in power.

In my presentation, I mentioned that in the late 1990s contemporary artists who had been criticizing the government since the 1980s showed a sudden change in their attitude after the fall of Suharto. Their works accused the political elite in Indonesia and not just the government. The works also attacked the political opposition. This shift was apparent as previous artists had joined the political reform movement and created works that were only propaganda. Artists probably were aware that there is a distance between art and politics. There is a phenomenal turning away from politics because after the general election for members of the General Assembly and House of Representatives early this year, it turned out that politicians could not be trusted. It is openly known that the government's critics used people's support in political reform in mid-1998 to strengthen their own political position. What they have in mind is only a seat among the political elite.

On the matter of Dadang Christanto and Semsar Siahaan leaving Indonesia to live in other countries, I don't think it indicates that they are being pursued by the government. Dadang and Semsar left Indonesia after the political reform in mid-1998 when Suharto's regime and the military were no longer in power. There was no reason at all to feel threatened. Previously, activists and governments critics were indeed hunted, kidnapped, and even killed by the military. So far as I know, artists were not on the list of people hunted because the government, which doesn't really understand art, never really considered the impact of political art as dangerous. Dadang immigrated to Australia because of more personal reasons. I don't know precisely why Semsar Siahaan left for Canada. Probably to find better opportunity for his career or to find a better life. I had not heard of him exhibiting political works or being involved in political movements before he left, so it is difficult to see political reasons behind his decision to leave the country.

**MC (A. Miki)** : May I ask Dr. Poshyananda to comment?

**Apinan Poshyananda**: I have just flown in from Bangkok this morning, so I hope my question makes sense. Now I am very interested in your view on what you call "brought-in" artists. I would like you to expand on that, especially with regard to the notion of regional activities and this idea of the preconceived notion of exoticism. How are local artists, whilst being brought or flown into particular nodal points in other areas, in the Pacific, or even in Europe or America, expected to perform certain kinds of activities, events or rituals, adapting to outside conditions? Is there any debate at home regarding these artists who, much of the time, want to fit into the network or fit into the art circuit? Sometimes they get caught up in certain demands to have them create a kind of dislocation where, perhaps, they have to inject, perform, or create certain performances according to the desired space. Perhaps you could give some examples, especially in this post-Suharto era with the examples of Moelyono, Taring Padi group, and Apotik Komik.

**J. Supangkat**: Thank you for the question, Dr. Poshyananda.

What I want to notify through the term "brought-in" artists is that the format of regional forum which we know today is formed out of many coincidences. What we have heard as reasons or arguments for regional exhibitions do not completely explain the format of regional forums. An example is the effort to formulate a certain type of regional art that goes on behind the scenes in a regional exhibition. On the surface, the "brought-in" artists could be interpreted as consequences of this kind of effort, to present representatives of countries that, in the end, show a certain concept of regional art. Nevertheless, there is a hidden reason that is rarely discussed openly; that is, to make the regional exhibition look significant. The "brought-in" artists in some way were used to making regional exhibitions become meaningful.

I don't think that the existence of this hidden reason means that curators, museums, art administrators who organize regional exhibitions have taken advantage of the "brought-in" artists. Thus, I have no objections about "brought-in" artists sometimes being subject to certain demands or being asked to create certain performances. In my opinion, authoritatively conducted regional exhibitions have been based on a kind of search for a certain concept and have not aimed to obtain certain benefits for the organizers. My intention is to show that, in the case of regional exhibitions, there is a distance between what was planned and what has come out as a result, and we should be more realistic in considering the reality and not be trapped by the initial idea of regional art.

I am sure that, in the beginning, Indonesian artist as "brought-in" artists did not have a clear idea of the benefits of being included. The reason was more like what David Elliott