

indulgent fantasy. Although it has been written:

"Certain societies become civilised by themselves and create a new culture: others take over from others. The first process takes a long time but the second is relatively quick. When a relatively uncivilized people come into contact with a people of a higher civilization, the natural law is for the less civilized to imitate the more civilized, even to the effect of total imitation. Imitation in itself is not harmful for it confers important benefits and after the preliminary phase of imitation, independent creation begins."

'General principles in the Evolution of Cultures'
Bankum Chandra Chatterji

In Japan and Korea I found many fine citadels to contemporary art - in India a developing situation where past bureaucratic practice is acknowledging the necessity for curatorial experience in mounting exhibitions and in China a substantial development coming from the colleges of art since their re-opening in 1977.

Speed material cultures - with electronic audio and visual reporting through satellite and cable technology - can forget that their communication is modified by the atmosphere and physics of place, the state of the recipient and the nature of time - its resonances. Are the quality and finer nuances of an event transmissible in their totality? Of course not! We receive a shortened version - a merely intellectual experience. What of the gentle cadence of poetry? The deep acoustics of the cathedral? Is that electronically reproducible? It certainly is not, namely because it omits the complete participation of the human being.

Our increasing ingenuity in the creation of new technologies not only blinds us to other more complete possibilities and enjoyments but precludes these finer and subtler operations by the scale of these productions. The chatter from transmitters and the noise of the internal combustion engine is everywhere. My son spoke to me recently of his continuing fascination/obsession with computer games and the newly developed virtual pets. Interaction includes feeding them. It has taken him longer to understand how to relate to a 'real dog'. But the beauty of that interaction and feedback where one plays with an animal and engages real qualities of loyalty, affection and love - operating a flexible intelligence - may win the day. Manufacturers of computer games can easily justify their trade; addiction creates a captive paying audience. One only need think of opium and tobacco. Computer games may improve the players' motor-interaction dexterity, but does it alienate them from the positive participation in human affairs?

How much of contemporary art is a similarly limited activity:

"My dear friend. Your art may be perfect in itself. We are not discussing that. I will return it to you if you like. But almost all artists are merely the forerunners of the mass-communications media. They may transmit, convey experience in one form, but this is not active but vicarious experience. To us, you see, art is not the ability to stimulate certain emotions. It is the ability to share feelings and also living, living. I show you a photograph of a cartoon and you smile. I show you a television programme and you laugh or cry. Is that living life, is that contributing to life? You may feel, of course, that this has a function: it makes people happy or relaxed. It also dwarfs their intellect, robs them of volition."

'Among the Dervishes'
Omar Michael Burke

In the years between 1994 and 1996 The Fruitmarket Gallery fulfilled part of its international remit by focusing on the contemporary visual art of Japan, Korea and China - an area containing a substantial proportion of the world's population, and currently a centre of extraordinary industrial dynamism and cultural change. The exhibitions of works by artists from these countries offers an insight into their cultures for British audiences, allowing the development of further co-operation in the future.

Liquid Crystal Futures: Contemporary Japanese Photography

"In Japan there is not the same separation of inside and out - of personal space and what is around. There is a greater awareness of the environment and more of a shared experience with others. In the West it seems that the mind transcribes and differentiates the experience of the world into linguistic categories which can be transacted as commodity - a linear knowledge to be merchandised. Being and unified experience become communicated through the reporting mind. Yet why is there this separation? Why this obsession with individualism?"

"Liquid Crystal Futures" forum statement
28 May 1994

"Liquid Crystal Futures: Contemporary Japanese Photography" showed at The Fruitmarket gallery from 28 May - 16 July 1996, and was an enriching and enjoyable experience for all the gallery staff. The exhibition was organised in association with The Japan Foundation, and was based on research carried out by myself in collaboration with two Japanese curators: Shinji Kohomoto of the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto and Yuko Hasegawa of Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo.

"Liquid Crystal Futures" presented eleven of Japan's foremost photographic artists, and explored the common thread which runs between their diverse work within the context of contemporary Japanese culture. Artists included in the show were Nobuyoshi Araki, Akira Gomi, Naoya Hatakeyama, Norio Kobayashi, Taiji Matsue, Ryuji Miyamoto, Tsuyoshi Ozawa, Tokihiro Satoh, Toshio Shibata, Manabu Yamanka and Tomohiko Yoshida. The exhibition demonstrated the richness of photography which, since its introduction to Japan, has had an extraordinary impact upon the Japanese imagination. Using the most up-to-date technology to produce images of impeccable quality, the artists chosen presented a particularly Japanese aesthetic within what was previously a 'Western' photographic tradition. This aesthetic, apparent in all the artists' work, has been summed up as "a consciousness of the transformative nature of photography, of the almost immediate translation of multi-dimensional world into two-dimensional image" (Portfolio Magazine, Issue 20), and is what constitutes the fundamental link behind all the different works on show. It forms a background to the exhibition's other aims which were to "report on the state of Japanese society in the 1980s and 90s" - to provide a sharp critique of a society that appears (at least on the surface) to have exchanged its traditional values of frugality for the instant gratification of Western style consumerism - whilst at the same time reflecting environmental issues of international importance.

At the time of the opening of the exhibition the curators and many of the artists visited Edinburgh. There were a series of events to contextualise the exhibition, including a forum, a lecture series and film and photography workshops. Thus the general public were able to encounter at first hand this presentation from such a different culture.

The Fruitmarket Gallery also published a full colour catalogue to accompany the exhibition.

The catalogue was a great success, and has now fully sold out. It has been vital to promoting the tour and providing the background for the public's understanding of the context of the work.

After its showing at The Fruitmarket Gallery, "Liquid Crystal Futures" embarked on a tour of Europe. The exhibition showed in six countries, including Denmark, Japan, Germany, Hungary and Sweden, and received enormous acclaim from both the public and press wherever it showed. It has now returned to Japan, having been seen by a grand total of 60,000 people all over Europe.

I have been asked to describe Western reaction to these exhibitions of contemporary art from the Pacific Rim. I have selected some relevant extracts from the press coverage of the exhibitions to amplify this.

In *The Guardian*, Beatrice Colin wrote:

"(Liquid Crystal Futures is) a group show which aims to comment on the social, cultural and political situation in Japan. Here, 11 Japanese photographers respond to the shock waves felt in a country seemingly locked in an identity crisis. Spoon fed on technology and consumerism but yearning for spirituality, it's a country where unemployment, homelessness and the destruction of the natural world by industry or short sighted development have all appeared in the wake of the boom years of the late eighties..."

... It is in the series of images by Tokihiro Satoh that contemporary Japan is imbued with spiritual optimism. Hundreds of small dots of light, made by the artist with a torch and a long exposure, inhabit deserted cities and swelling seas. Curved around the gallery walls, these large black and white photographs are mythical, magical illusions which capture the moment over and over again."

Beatrice Colin, *The Guardian*

In *The Scotsman*, Murdo MacDonald described "Liquid Crystal Futures" as an "outstanding exhibition", going on to say that:

"(Liquid Crystal Futures is) a show in which Western preconceptions about Japan must take second place. Often we represent Japan in the West as somewhere 'different', and yet the difference we are acknowledging has a kind of stereotyped familiarity to it. In this exhibition the difference is real and, because of that reality, it is both more sharply perceived and, paradoxically, less separate. It is no longer the difference of stereotype but an illumination of cultural meaning..."

...these photographers recognise that a culture is not some act of divine permanence, but is itself that most artificial of things, a construction of consensus and power. This notion is familiar enough in the West, where it tends to be treated most successfully on a theoretical level, but here every work seems to be imbued with a visual awareness of it."

Murdo MacDonald, *The Guardian*

In *Galleries Magazine* Ralph Hughes described the exhibition as "the most ubiquitous means of representation directed at its material home", and goes on to describe it as:

"... a diverse show of eleven photographers depicting a country generally regarded as a paradigm of pluralism, consumerism and the post-modern. Sometimes explicit, but always a context, is the city of Tokyo and its incessant transformations. It is certainly a well chosen title, suggesting not only a

conflation of past and present, fantasy and fact, divination and investment but also of traditional Japanese aesthetics and modern methods of visual display."

Ralph Hughes, *Galleries Magazine*

Information and Reality: Korean Contemporary Art

"Today, as we become more and more dependent on the comforts of modern science and technology, we should not neglect the cultivation of a moral value system and aesthetics through self-awareness."

Lim Young-Bang, Introduction to the Kwangju Biennale catalogue

In 1995 Korea celebrated 50 years of liberation from Japanese occupation. Designated 'Year of Art' in Korea, 1995 also saw the launch of the first Kwangju Biennale with its theme "Beyond the Borders" and its self-proclaimed aim of contributing towards a "global artistic village." Co-curated by Lee Yongwoo and Graeme Murray, "Information and Reality" was the first major exhibition of contemporary installation and video art from Korea to show in the UK, and represented a unique introduction for the British public to current developments in art from the Pacific Rim.

"Information and Reality" showed from 28 October to 2 December 1995 and featured the work of eleven Korean artists on the cutting edge of developments in contemporary art. The exhibition raised issues of Korea's history, present realities and problems, including the development of industrial society and information technology, internationalism and regionalism, the destruction of the environment and, of course, the ongoing problems of a society which is still very much subject to male domination. Artists included in the show were feminist installation and performance artist An Pil-Yun, Buddhist nun turned installation artist Ahn Sung Keum, textile installation artist Kim Soo-Ja, award winning independent film-maker Yunah Hong, installation artists Moon Beom and Oh Sang-Gyel, performance/installation artist and sculptor Park Sil, installation artists Cho, Duck-Hyun, feminist performance artist Bul Lee, social realist painter Lim OK-Sang and Artist of the Year and Biennale exhibitor, Jheon Soo Cheon.

At The Fruitmarket Gallery, on 28 October 1995, Sil Park performed a shamanistic ritual around her installation describing 'the meeting between plus and minus to create a life' and 'the explanation of the balance between human and the holy land through the ritual'.

The Fruitmarket Gallery also produced a publication, *Information and Reality: Korean Contemporary Art*, written by exhibition curator Lee Yongwoo. Featuring colour and black and white reproductions of all the exhibiting artist's work, the publication played an important role in contextualising the exhibition.

Once again, some extracts from the press coverage of the exhibition. Writing in *The List Magazine*, Ian Smith describes the exhibition as follows:

"Celebrating 50 years of liberation from Japanese occupation, Korea has also found a voice on the international art circuit. During Korean Year of Art, the traditional barriers between east and west are being challenged ... Scotland is getting its own taste of Korean Art, with Information and Reality, an exhibition at Edinburgh's Fruitmarket Gallery. Sparked by 50 years of liberation from Japanese rule, the show explores social, political and historical issues in Korean society, attempting to make the nation's art and culture accessible..."

... Each of the contributing artists make original, highly expressive statements about Korea and art; information and reality. The subject is of great relevance in Korea, a nation that has in recent history experienced colonisation, war, partition, military dictatorship and rapid industrialisation. It is also highly pertinent to western society, where information superhighways make us more aware than ever of the gap between what we are told and what is the truth."

Ian Smith, *The List Magazine*

In *The Scotsman*, Robin Baillie writes:

"The smooth passage from this spartan spiritual aesthetic to the minimalism of Western modern art is apparent in the work of many of the artists in the show. This selection of Korean art sharpens our understanding of the differences between our cultures but also underlines the empathy that can be shared and expressed in art."

Robin Baillie, *The Scotsman*

Reckoning with the Past: Contemporary Chinese Painting

In 1996 The Fruitmarket Gallery continued its commitment to bringing new and exciting work from East Asia. Its exhibition of contemporary Chinese painting "Reckoning with the Past" showed during Edinburgh International Festival, and attracted a record audience figure of 23,171 in its eight week showing. The fifteen contemporary artists selected for "Reckoning with the Past" were drawn from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and are at the forefront of the contemporary Chinese art world. They are united by their use of painting as a means to interpret the past, whilst developing a contemporary Chinese visual language which expresses their current cultural situation. The exhibiting artists were, from China, Feng Mengbo, Yu Youhan, Zhang Xiaogong, Wei Dong, Liu Dahong, Yang Yiping, Wang Xingwei, He Douling and Mao Lizhi; from Taiwan Cheng Tsai-Tung, Yu Peng and Wu Tien-Chang and from Hong Kong, Lucia Cheung, Oscar Ho and Sze Yuen.

"Reckoning with the Past" was curated by Chang Tsong-zung, the highly regarded Director of the Hanart TZ Gallery in Hong Kong, in collaboration with the Fruitmarket Gallery. The curator and some of the artists visited Scotland during the exhibition. After the showing in Edinburgh, the exhibition toured to three venues in Scotland before going on to show at the Cornerhouse Gallery in Manchester. In October 1997 it will go to Fundacio Oriente in Lisbon, Portugal, and further international venues are currently in development.

There is also a highly successful accompanying publication, with several critical essays which discuss issues of Chinese art and culture in more depth. Local, national and international press coverage for the exhibition has been highly complimentary, some extracts follow:

Alan Riding, writing for both the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*, described "Reckoning with the Past" as "a show which provides a rare window for the West on contemporary Chinese art." He goes on to say:

"In a China that is rushing wildly toward its own idea of economic development, obliterating a good deal of its remaining cultural heritage in the process, some Chinese artists have found an unusual way of expressing dissent: They have begun looking backward, hoping that nostalgia can serve as a mirror, to remind the country that it has a past. Yet it is a measure of how quickly China is

changing that this 'past' may be as recent as two decades ago. It is also a past that in some ways is being romanticised not to approve of what may of happened or to suggest that things were better then, but simply to recall that there is more to China than the current feverish drive for profits."

Alan Riding, *International Herald Tribune*

Writing for *The Times*, John Russell Taylor described the exhibition as "the most exciting Edinburgh Festival show", and goes on to observe:

"The title refers more to the subject matter and the artists' attitudes than to the styles in which they paint. Two things are immediately remarkable: that without looking at the catalogue one could not tell for certain which are from the mainland and which are from the islands; and that all the heterogeneous influences, which only five years ago were bumping up against one another, largely unabsorbed, in Chinese art have been taken on board, understood, and turned effortlessly to the individual purposes of a new generation of artists."

John Russell Taylor, *The Times*

In *The Scotsman*, George Wyllie was surprised to find his "emotions stirred", and writes that:

"(Reckoning with the Past) radiates a glimpse of reckonings for the future. Fifteen artists from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, do this with wit and precision and knock askew our belief in the monotonous predictability of that unextended Chinese art so far delivered to us. Have no fear, the real stuff is still around and this exhibition is proof. Brimming with spirit and an obvious love for their country, there is never the less a sadness in the air over the frustration of broader aspirations-see the incisive bloodlines in Zhang Xiaogang's sharp portraits. There is the deep passion here, and I warm to the bravery and honesty of these artists..."

...The technique of many of them is based on traditional requirements for painting, and that discipline has ensured impeccable drawing skills which are put to effective use in gentle satire. The blatant blaze of the sort of colour seen on calendars in Chinese restaurants is put to work by a pop and comic-book approach for kicking at absurdities. Official China, seemingly tolerant to a degree, says this art is not what Chinese art should be, but dammit there it is! We've heard that said about art before, and I hope that by now sagacity and good sense will prevail for a happier journey through an inevitable transition."

George Wyllie, *The Scotsman*

In all, our experience of presenting art from the Pacific Rim has been very positive, and all exhibitions have been received with great interest from both the press and public alike. "Reckoning with the Past" has already been seen by 61,000 people at four venues, and we are currently discussing a tour of New Zealand in 1998. We are now developing our exhibition of contemporary Indian art for 1998, which we hope will be a similar success. By curating and touring exhibitions of art from the Pacific Rim, The Fruitmarket Gallery hopes to promote public interest and understanding of the life and culture of these countries. We also hope that it may be possible to extend this cultural exchange by touring exhibitions of Scottish art in the countries of the Pacific Rim, thus introducing their audiences to the art and culture of Scotland.

Looking to the future, the problematic side is the continuing global political conflicts, both internal and external, which - through bad government and corruption - result in the overproduction of arms and lead to famine, destruction of people and their environments: industrial over-production, pollution and nuclear poisoning.

The optimistic side is that the melting pot of the ASEAN and Pacific countries continues to be dynamic, and to develop an improved culture, as happened in the previous melting pots, Europe and the USA. Let us hope that they are careful not to repeat the mistakes of others. One has only to look at the many areas of vast ecological devastation in these countries, perhaps permanently damaged by primitive, uncultivated and impulsive industrial practice.

As to the artists, they surely have a responsibility to ensure the relevance of their practice, discipline and guardianship of what is essential in our cultures, so that our children grow up in a future of wonderful qualities.

"Those who have the eyes to see, let them see the connection, those who have the ears to hear, let them hear the truth from midst the tangled streams of falsehood, but let them first develop the facility to know the texture of truth, to feel the truth, to speak the truth and create a climate in which truth is the accepted norm and not something out of the ordinary."

'Rafael Lefort'
The Teachers of Gurdjieff

SAM Is Not a Foreign Name

Kwok Kian Chow

Director, Singapore Art Museum

About This Presentation

In the brief given to me by the organisers of this symposium (*Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered*), it is suggested that I introduce the Singapore Art Museum, its history, vision, exhibition and collection policies, as well as issues, problems and lessons learnt from the presenter's personal involvement and from a personal point of view. This is a wide scope and involves moving through and forth institutional and personal viewpoints, not to mention about the clumsiness of having to mark the speaker at different points. Let me just say that I am not here to do a PR piece and as a concerned museum administrator, and given that the Singapore Art Museum is a serious and sensitive institution firmly committed to the advancement of visual arts, I am here to share with you the experiences of SAM and the museological issues that they point to.

Singapore Art Museum

When the name "Singapore Art Museum" was decided upon, one of the criticisms of this name was the discomfort with the acronym "SAM." If SAM was known as the "National Art Gallery," the acronym could have been "NAGA," the mythological serpent who was not unrelated to fertility and creation. This would have been an appropriate acronym if one wanted to read into the semantics of which. Anyway, the acronym was not an important point in deciding the name of an institution and the discussion on acronyms was a light-hearted one. Now that SAM is in operation for about one and half years, "SAM" is widely recognised in Singapore as the museum SAM and not any relative Sam. I mention this as the starting point of my presentation (at the Japan Foundation Asia Centre) to highlight the distinct presence of an institution. I will, after going into the background of the development of SAM, discuss the role of art museum as an institution in the Asian context.

The term "museum" was used because it was felt that a gallery tended to be a neutral space for art display while a museum was more interpretative. To develop an art institution in the context of a community's own aesthetic tradition and yet in the periphery of the international art system ñ a familiar post-colonial disposition - required an institution of identity and character, with dynamic exhibition and collection programmes anchored in critical discourse, community support and educational vision. These, naturally, also exist in tension and balances would have to be sought.

SAM's History

The SAM is both a continuation and a break from its predecessor, the National Museum Art Gallery which was established in 1976. The National Museum Art Gallery represented a model fairly common in the development of art museology in Asia, which is a central visual arts exhibition venue created largely through the efforts of the artist community, and which allows fairly free access to art exhibitions with little or no curatorial effort. The space is maintained through public or corporate funding as well as through rental.

In Singapore, with the formation of the National Heritage Board in 1993, the curated exhibitions at the NMAG begun to be billed as organised by the SAM to denote a new level of art exhibition programming under the banner of "SAM," although SAM did not have its

own building until early 1996. (Important exhibitions during the August 1993 - January 1996 period include "From Ritual to Romance: Paintings Inspired by Bali," "Pont des Arts: Nanyang Artists in Paris 1925-1970," "One Year After Graduation, Pago-Pago to Gelombang: 40 Years of Latiff Mohidin," "Silent Cry: Jia Youfu," and "Inspired Gifts: Donated Works in the Singapore Art Museum.") This change in programming denoted a shift towards the museum model (an interpretative institution with exhibition and collection programmes anchored in critical discourse, community support and educational vision). The mission statement of the SAM from early 1996 onwards has been: To preserve and present the art histories and contemporary art practices of Singapore and the Southeast Asian region so as to facilitate visual arts education, exchange, research and development.

Exhibition and Collection Programmes

When SAM had its own building which is the renovated Old Saint Joseph's Institution, the new museum opened with the inaugural exhibition, "Modernity and Beyond," which had two components - "A Century of Art in Singapore" and "Themes in Southeast Asian Art." The Singapore art exhibition was an attempt at a broad ranging historical survey of art in Singapore and was promptly criticised as an essentialisation of art history in Singapore. This was perhaps the first marking of SAM taking on an institutional role and how it could stimulate discussion in art. The greater impact of the museum model as opposed to the earlier gallery model was instantaneously felt.

"Themes in Southeast Asian Art" utilised a thematic approach and the exhibition represented a very different kind of programming opportunity. While the works in the Singapore exhibition could have been fairly easily put together in similar or different permutations, the Southeast Asian exhibition was historic in that the wide ranging grouping of the works drawn from Southeast Asian public and private collections, in addition to SAM's own collection, was unprecedented in any international exhibition programme. The prerequisite of an art institution was imperative in the realisation of such programming. SAM's acquisition activity has been on the increase since the transfer to the new building, but it has yet to develop a collection that could support an exhibition like "Themes in Southeast Asian Art," which may be said to be the goal of SAM's collection development in the foreseeable future.

Since the title of this seminar session is "Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered: Issues for the Museums," it may not be appropriate for me to also discuss about the Western art exhibition programme at the SAM. However, in order to get down to the museological issues, I will need to mention the "Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum" exhibition at the SAM which turned out to be the most popular visual arts show in Singapore ever. SAM sees it as important in presenting exhibitions from all over the world even in the light of promoting the appreciation of Asian modern and contemporary art.

Sometimes placing international and permanent collection exhibitions side by side offer special opportunities of dialogue and comparison. One forthcoming (at the point of preparing this paper) example is the "German Art: 30 Years of Contemporary German Art" (curated by Dieter Ronte) featuring works of Georg Baselitz, Jorg Immendorff, A.R. Penck, Sigmar Polke, Gerhard Richter and others which will come on at the same time (July 1997) with permanent collection exhibition, "Weight of Tradition" (curated by Joanna Lee) which will feature works of Chua Ek Kay, Amanda Heng, Troung Tan, Redza Piyadasa, Nirmala Shanghamulingam, Imelda Cajipe-Endaya, Jim Supangkat and others. The traditional elements in German art and Southeast Asian art will be highlighted in the exhibitions. This

offers a unique educational opportunity by the very juxtaposing of the programmes for the Singapore context.

The SAM has to provide a platform to research, present and debate the aesthetic heritage of Singapore and of the larger Southeast Asian region while negotiating with that prevailing conceptual category known as "art" in the community. There is, of course, that dimension of post-colonial complexity to it all. "Modernity and Beyond" had about half of the visitorship of "Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum." In an analysis taking both the museum programming and the characteristics of art reception into consideration, *Modernity and Beyond* was a great success. (The other important exhibitions in 1996 were: "Tradition and Innovation: Chinese Ink Painting in the 20th Century," "Unyielding Materials: Works by Singapore Sculptors," "Voyage to the South Seas: Nanyang School Paintings," "Artists in Education - Education in Art," and "Rapport: 8 Artists from Singapore and Australia.")

In terms of programming policy, to say it in a succinct manner, SAM has a twin programme of international exhibition and Southeast Asia collection and research.

SAM should also take a critical view of what is meant by curatorship in the light of the development of visual arts in Singapore. One result of the transition from the gallery to the museum model is the reduction of opportunities for artists to exhibit their works. That capability known as curatorship should produce results in ways that engender an expanded viewership for the visual arts, a widened critical dimension of art appreciation, and a more stimulating environment for art production. The responsibility of an art museum as an institution is to ensure that it transcends sectarian interests in the art world so that its impacts are positive and dynamic.

Institution and Its Context

In most countries in Asia, except perhaps Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, the art infrastructure does not have the comprehensive range of artists, critics, historians, art schools, publications, museums, galleries, contemporary art spaces, auctions, collectors, events and critical mass. Let us recognise that those Asian communities which do have the comprehensive range have modelled the development to a large extent to the international art system, namely the Western art world. Assuming that all of the above components of the art system and the ways they are currently aligned, complete with the tensions and dynamics, form the necessary environment for visual arts development, Asian art museology will have to develop in rather different directions depending on the range available in each environment. Hence, an art museum should be perceived as an institution in a specific context.

In the case of Singapore and the SAM, one of the things we are involved in is the planning of another exhibition space which will somewhat fill the gap left by the former National Museum Art Gallery. The plan to revamp the gallery model is in no way suggesting the bankruptcy of curatorship. We have to agree, on the other hand, that Asian modern and contemporary art scholarship is still relatively young and most curatorial staff, being recent graduates of Western post-graduate schools, are trained in Western art historical methodology. An Asian art museum, as an institution in a specific context, must deal with the concrete history of a local modern art development and the curatorial frames available to handle this development may be limiting at the moment.

Furthermore, given that one of the tendencies of contemporary art is to articulate identities,

situations and ideas beyond the written language, reaching those areas of human expressions which other linguistic modes may not traverse, any form of curatorship which rely heavily on existing aesthetic and cultural frames may be ill equipped to handle the art works.

An example of how an institution could transcend sectarian interests in the art world is the pragmatism of balancing the museum model and gallery model in a given art developmental context. In creating the exhibition space beyond museum curatorial programming, an institution addresses the need for a space for experimental art which is like the Australian model of contemporary art institute, as well as a space for entrenched local practices which the art critical scholarship is still trying to make sense of.

Educational Vision

In its educational programming, the SAM promotes the exhibits as complex make-up of historical, cultural, ideological, emotional and creative elements. The objective of SAM's exhibition programme, therefore, is to enrich a viewer by allowing him/her to discover the wealth of human creative and expressive potentials through art appreciation. Given this generic objective which is not tied to specific periods of art, it may said that SAM is not so concerned with the division between traditional, modern and contemporary art as much as the realistic educational potentials of these works. As far as the educational role of the museum is concerned, priority will be given to a large potential audience to promote visit to the art museum and art appreciation. In the words of SAM's education officer, Belen Ponferrada: "Learning is largely concerned with ensuring that opportunities exist for the largest number of individuals to find their level of intellectual and emotional engagement with the works of art and the ideas presented through its exhibitions." This learning process applies to both the institution and its viewers.

Emergence of an Art Gallery

Ushiroshoji Masahiro

Chief Curator, Asian Art Gallery Project, Fukuoka Art Museum

The new Fukuoka Asian Art Gallery is under construction right now and scheduled to open in the spring of 1999. The programs of the new gallery will focus on Asian art and will be based on what has been done in this area by the Fukuoka Art Museum since its opening. It will inherit this legacy and add to and expand on it. The Asian gallery is like a baby which has been nourished in the womb of the museum and is now about to be born. Speaking about the Asian Art Gallery which has yet to appear means discussing the activities of its mother, the Fukuoka Art Museum, over the last twenty years.

The Fukuoka Art Museum and the Asian Art Shows

The Fukuoka Art Museum opened in 1979 amid the museum building boom promoted by city and prefectural governments all over Japan. The inaugural exhibition was a show of Asian Art.

These public art museums sprouting up like mushrooms after a rain were mostly collecting modern art from Europe and the United States as well as our own country. The modern art of Europe was seen as the model which had been followed by Japan in developing its own modern art. This dualistic scheme informed the activities of most of the museums, so there was an inevitable danger that they would all come to resemble one another. A major issue for any new museum was how to create a unique identity that would set it apart from the others and how to find a philosophy to support such an identity.

The Fukuoka Art Museum had a collection of ancient oriental art which was unusually substantial for a regional museum, and it had moved quickly to collect postwar art from inside and outside Japan. Therefore, the collection was both varied and extensive, but the museum was still seeking a better-defined and original direction for its programs.

When the museum opened in the late seventies, there was a growing tendency to reassess the conventional view of modern art history which placed the West at the center. The seventh conference of the IAA (International Association of Art), a UNESCO organization, passed a resolution stating that "artists in each cultural region of the world should take a new look at their own traditions and create a new art in response to the demands of the time."¹

The Japan National Committee of the IAA was active in traveling around Asia, organizing IAA committees, and promoting exhibitions of contemporary Asian art in Japanese museums. Since ancient times the area around Fukuoka has been a point of contact between the Japanese islands, the Chinese mainland, and the Korean peninsula. Because of these geographical and historical circumstance, the Japan National Committee of the IAA approached the Fukuoka Art Museum about celebrating its opening with an exhibition of Asian art. With this beginning, artistic exchanges with Asia became a major part of the museum's programs.

History of the Asian Art Show

The First Asian Art Show was made up of two parts. The inaugural exhibition, entitled "Asian Artists Exhibition Part I: Modern Asian Art - India, China, Japan" (1979) was

followed a year later with the largest comprehensive survey of contemporary Asian art even seen anywhere in the world, "Asian Artists Exhibition Part II: Festival: Contemporary Asian Art Show, 1980." After this, shows of Asian art were held roughly at five-year intervals, the second in 1985, the third in 1989, and the fourth in 1994. The Fifth Asian Art Show will inaugurate the new Asian Art Gallery in 1999. The titles of these shows have remained the same in Japanese, *Ajia Bijutsuten*, but the English title was changed to "Asian Art Show" rather than "Asian Artists Exhibition" after the first show.

Over the years, the Fukuoka Art Museum has energetically carried out a variety of activities centering on this exhibition, doing surveys, gathering data, and building a network of personal contacts. By purchasing major works shown in the exhibitions, the museum has built up a collection of 800 works of Asian art. Also, we now have museum staff who have become experts on contemporary and modern Asian art. These linked activities focused on Asian art are the foundation of the new Asian Art Gallery. Even more important is the philosophy that we have developed through the attempts made to solve the many problems that have occurred in these exhibitions of Asian art. That philosophy will be the backbone of the gallery.

The Early Asian Art Exhibitions

From the start, our Asian art exhibitions were organized with a definite, unified point of view. Instead of being intended to convey a certain message, these exhibitions designed as "festivals" where Asian artists could come together and interact. This intention is expressed in the title of the 1980 exhibition, "Asian Artist Exhibition Part II: Festival Contemporary Asian Art Show 1980." The use of the word festival in the title makes it clear that the show was to be a gathering of Asian artists rather than an exhibition of Asian art. The primary purpose of the exhibition was "mutual exchange between Asian artists,"² and part of the reason for this orientation was the involvement of the IAA, an extremely broad-based artists' organization. Another reason was that the staff of the Fukuoka Art Museum had little knowledge of Asian contemporary art. Because of their lack of experience and know-how, they had no choice but to depend on the participating countries. We were faced with the difficult task of going out with little preparation to assemble examples of contemporary art from thirteen different countries and bring it back to a museum which had never held an exhibition of this kind. Therefore, the selection of artists and specific works was left up to art museums and government agencies in the participating countries. In this initial project, most of our energy was expended in finding institutions in these countries who we could trust with the task of making appropriate selections.

At the time the museum opened, the Asian show was seen primarily as an international cultural exchange program separate from the acquisition and exhibition programs which were considered to be the main activities of the museum.³ This is a reflection of the fact that the museum was then rather skeptical about the quality of Asian art. The goals of the museum were set in the dualistic framework of Japan versus the West, which contained no place for the contemporary art of Asia. The activity of showing the contemporary art of Asia naturally leads beyond this dualistic way of thinking and encourages reassessment of these categories. However, our initial involvement with Asian art was seen as a form of international exchange not connected with the major museum functions of collecting and exhibiting, and this dualistic viewpoint remained intact.

Obtaining Autonomy: From Festival to Exhibition

Looking back at the history of the Asian art exhibition from the standpoint of the organizers,