

I would say that it began as a festival and matured into an art exhibition. There is also a history of how the institution organizing the exhibition achieved independence.

This process is reflected in the method of selecting works for inclusion in the exhibition. For the first and second exhibition, the job of choosing the works was turned over to the countries of origin. From the third exhibition on, Fukuoka determined a general theme to unify the entire exhibition. Then each country nominated artists and works according to the theme, and the Fukuoka Art Museum made the final selection in order to maintain an independent position as organizer of the exhibition. In the fourth exhibition, the works were divided into groups according to the issues that they raised rather than by country.

Thus, we were able to achieve independence as the curators of the exhibition. As the Asian Art Show became more independent and took on a more unified structure, it grew and matured from a festival to an exhibition. In the same way, the Asian Art Show gradually moved from the periphery to the center of the Fukuoka Art Museum's activities.

From Exoticism to Contemporary Expression

The Fourth Asian Art Show developed out of a change in emphasis from "exoticism" to "contemporary expression." This was a change in thinking that involved the public, the Fukuoka Art Museum, and Asian artists.

Initially, the people who came to see the Asian Art Show were expecting to see unusual forms of art from the "South Seas." Most people held a stereotypical view that the West provided the chief model for what art should be and Japan followed it, and there was a firmly-held preconception of Asian art as "backward." Not only the audience but the curators of the Fukuoka Art Museum who organized the exhibition held this entrenched view of a "backward Asia," and they saw the contemporary art of Asia as something strange and exotic.

Also, the artists of Asia themselves had a similar situation. At that time, the artists of Asia were frantically searching for "national identity." What are the unique qualities of the art of our country? In many of the young countries of Asia which are establishing new nation states after independence, the search for national identity is a national issue. The artists have also started to seek a basis for the uniqueness of Asian art different from the West in the "great Asian tradition" of the past. The more this great Asian tradition is sought, the greater the risk of arriving at an exotic view of Asia.

The public, the curators, and the artists all sought this exotic image of Asia. The history of the Asian art exhibition at the Fukuoka Art Museum was the history of a struggle with this exoticism, a convenient image of Asia which suited us. In the process of holding four of these exhibitions, the organizers of the exhibition, the artists, and the viewers gradually got beyond this exotic stereotype and began to see the contemporary art of Asia as the direct expression of people living in the present age.

From the Fourth Asian Art Show to the Asian Art Gallery

As we worked on these Asian Art Shows, we began to think differently about the dualistic concept of Western art as model and Japanese art as derivative. We began to look beyond the relationship of a country's art with the United States and Europe and became more interested in its inner, spontaneous elements and its autonomous qualities. At the same time the museum began collecting Asian art and a new goal, "collecting leading works from ancient

through modern times which express the uniqueness of Asian art," was added to the existing policy. This forced a reappraisal of the ancient oriental art already in the museum collection. The art of China and Korea had been appreciated, historically, within the traditional framework of Japanese art, and examined only in relation to Japanese art. Now it was reevaluated in terms of the uniqueness of Asian art.

The Fourth Asian Art Show provided experiences which were important in the formation of the new Asian gallery. In this fourth exhibition, we invited one artist from each country and arranged for them to stay in Fukuoka for three weeks. A variety of workshops and public demonstrations of art-making were organized as well as performances and lectures. The demonstrations gave the galleries a different look every day, and the live performances and lectures were very enjoyable to the public. This represented a shift from the static quality of previous exhibitions to a more dynamic and changing presentation. In a special event, "Traffic Art in Asia - Rickshaw Painting in Bangladesh," we introduced a form of art that moves through the streets, a part of everyday life which transcends the usual boundaries of art and challenges the modern concepts of the "fine arts" and "museum art."

In the process of developing the concept of the Asian Art Gallery, we felt that we would like to use this lively approach more regularly instead of limiting it to infrequent temporary exhibitions. This was the thinking that went into our present conception of what we would like the Asian Art Gallery to do. We also began to reassess the "modernity" of Asia, taking a second look at things which were rendered peripheral through the birth of so-called "modern art." This is the background for our plans to make the Asian Art Gallery into a dynamic institution rather than just another art museum. We are especially in implementing more exchanges and artist in residence programs and carrying out research in areas different from a conventional museum. A museum is a system where a variety of activities - collection and display of art works, research, cultural exchanges, and education - work together efficiently. In the transition from the Asian Art Show to the Asian Art Gallery, we have integrated Asian art, forms of art which previously had no place in the museum, into the overall system of museum programs.

The embryo carried by the Fukuoka Art Museum has been nurtured slowly, from exoticism to contemporary expression, from festival to exhibition, from exhibition to museum, from the stereotype of "the West versus Japan" to an understanding based on the cultural context of each work.

Notes

¹"Appendix A: 21 Congress Decisions," In *Art 68, 7th International Congress of Art Bulletin: 1974*, International Association of Art, UNESCO, 1974.

Also see *The Japan Artists Association News*, no.257 (1978).

² According to the statement of the purpose of the exhibition in "Exhibition Plan: *Asian Artists Exhibition Part II: Festival: Contemporary Asian Art Show, 1980*," (Asian Artists Exhibition Committee, Fukuoka Art Museum, 1980). "This exhibition is being held in order to improve exchange between Asian artists and to assist them in analyzing their mutual cultural identities through displaying contemporary works of art by Asian artists."

³ For instance, the section called "International Exchange" in "Master Plan of Fukuoka Art Museum." *Fukuoka Art Museum Annual Report, no.1* (Fukuoka Art Museum, 1983), states: "Taking into consideration Fukuoka's character as an international, culturally oriented city, the Museum shall promote exchanges with art institutions abroad (especially with Asian countries) as part of the wide-ranging activities of the Museum." The report indicates that the place of Asian art was simply "international exchange."

(Translated by Stanley N. Anderson)

Modern Asian Art: Its Construction and Reception

John Clark

Associate Professor, School of Asian Studies, University of Sydney

Summary:

The institutional and intellectual construction of modern Asian art at its sites of origin will be summarized and comparison made with recent circuits of reception in other-than-Asian sites. In particular the role of receiving cultural formations - including funding bodies such as government and corporate foundations, museums, gatekeeper figures and gatekeeping functions, as well as the mediating function of artists themselves as major institutions of reception - will be examined in art historical perspective.

A. The construction of a modern Asian art

The notion that there might be a modern art outside Euramerica is a beguiling but not necessarily a bewitching one. This paper will not discuss the interesting historical analogies between modern art in Asia and that in the Middle East, in Africa, or in Latin America, but will geographically confine itself to that area constructed as 'Asia' which is geographically East of the Indus valley, South of the Siberian tundra, and North of the Arafura Sea. To summarize briefly, Asian modern art can be constructed from various positions which include:

1. It is seen as a reflexive 'other' of Euramerican modernity, in some projection and extension of an 'Orientalist' mis-construal of what might be the negative essence of Euramerican modernity.
2. It is seen as a 'local' or 'peripheral' modernity which negotiates a space within an overall modernism with its 'centre' in Euramerica. This is a realistic - if self-limiting - reinsertion of Asian modern art into a genealogy which privileges Euramerican origination and thereby unavoidably accepts its hegemony, if not its neo-colonial domination, as a basic premise. Elements of this modernity have been discussed as 'reverse Orientalism' or 'counter-appropriation.'
3. It can be hermeneutically understood as a parallel case to the results of the transfer of Euramerican academy realism, where the 'modern' is an attribute of a stylistic penumbra the acceptance of whose various shadings can be historically traced. This approach treats modernism as a society and culture-neutral style, and tracks its distribution by art historical or quasi- archaeological methods.
4. It can be accepted as a series of discontinuous and heterogenous modernities arising from a specific structure of contact and conflict with Euramerican powers from about 1750 to 1950, where various conditions of contact, from absolute domination to precarious - if successful - maintenance of state and cultural autonomy, led to mapping by local discourses themselves.
5. It can be seen as a modality - among others - by which the world beyond Euramerica has resisted and finally overcome Euramerican impredations since the Renaissance.
6. It can be seen as a relatively isolated and autonomous series of phenomena which appear in the guise of transfers from Euramerican modernity, but are in fact reactions against it from deep strata of culture which always had their own dynamics isolated from Euramerica or indeed any other 'external' source.

There is no space here to offer a critique of these six positions. My own lies between four and five. But one should note that these not purely intellectual constructs of discrete art historical data in works and artists' lives resting beyond them, just to be subsequently deployed as 'neutral' mapping constructs. These sorts of position underly the institutional practice of defining 'modern Asian art' by many modern artists and specifically many modern curators and critics since the 1950s. As such they are linked to the functions of those institutions which define them and - if it is not premature to make the Foucauldian extension - to regimes of practice which function in a broader sense as discourses of knowledge above and beyond any particular institution which may support them. Indeed if there were no institutions whose practices required the separating of origins as a way of legitimating resource flows in curatorial time, art historical research, or exhibition budgets, it can be doubted that much artistic exchange would be recognized by current curatorial or art historical practice. Without origin there would be no 'movement between' for curators to be mediators for or for art historians and critics to think about. Saying where works or their creators come from is part of a politics of identification which stands counter to any non-originary association by types of art practice. Specification of origin allows the counting of types, the cross-cultural grouping of works or creators of excellence, even when they are grouped under a curatorial category rather than by adherence to a set of stylistic positions defined developmentally or by imbrication in contingent discourses. When we speak of 'cross-cultural,' for institutional practice this means movement or comparison between 'cultures identified by their location within the boundaries of a modern nation-state.' Exhibition of any kind of art between such presumed cultural centres is inherently a modern phenomenon. This is the case even if the art works are not 'modern' in any stylistic sense, or are from periods which a culture identifies as 'pre-modern.' This is also the reason why cross-cultural exhibition of 'pre-modern' works which supposedly has nothing to do with the 'modern' stylistically is often part of a contradictory and motivated cultural agenda which at the very least attempts to re-position the 'modern' by the form in which the 'pre-modern' is re-appropriated for the gaze of others.

Privileging origin and then leaving the grounds for its distinction unargued is obviously a way of privileging those who make the distinction, and leaving the grounds for the further judgements they may make based on it also unargued. Here the practice of curators and some art historians and critics parts company. The domain of practice of the former is interested in having works and judgements about them seen and accepted by the curators' public.¹

But the interest of art historians and critics is in having grounds for further judgements argued out, and their arguments about history or the problematics of works articulated. In these acceptance of a work or an argument or critical position about one is not the primary aim. It is to this basic difference in interest in the reception of modern Asian art in other-than-Asian countries that some problematics between curators and art historians or critics may be traced.

B. Reception of Modern Asian Art

Modern Asian art is received in terms of nascent curatorial categories at sites and within circuits of reception at other-than-Asian sites. Some times these curatorial categories are of the simplest kind: country of origin, type of practice, other-cultural affiliations of the artist; categorizability within the world view and interest position of a particular curator or institution. This institutional interest is clear from those sites which have in the last ten years discovered there was a contemporary art in Asia when there has always been one, and

at least since the 1950s, a modernist one in a recognizably Euramerican sense. The world view these other-than-Asian sites of reception operate through is a kind of historical *déjà vu*, but applied to the contemporary and privileged by their self-legitimizing authority to select from the cultural constitutions out of which the art works are drawn. In an important sense their discovery of the contemporary other corresponds to a kind of exoticizing of the present as a way of relativising discourses of modernity which are already closed within other-than-Asian cultures, or may appear to be so to professional mediators. Perhaps one should not be too critical of exoticizing processes in inter-cultural relations because these are often neither simplistic nor an outward sign of an inner false consciousness, but rather part of a contested learning process compromised as it must be in the world by mutual ignorance and by power positions. Exoticizing as part of inter-cultural learning processes should be judged by its results, as much as one should not deflect awareness of its structure from our understanding of those results.²

The problem of circuits of reception is more complex and possibly unavailable to full understanding until museum and gallery archives are opened.³ Modern Asian art is received within an increasingly globalized series of circuits of reception and exchange. It is difficult to judge whether and how far such circuits in reception practice for art are either sub-types of other kinds of circuit in the economy or are caused by much more far reaching and dynamic economic changes through market mechanisms where institutional intervention is of a quite different order to that of museums and galleries as art reception sites. Some very simple observations may be made. Modern Asian art seems to constitute an un-exploited area of discourse for Euramerican curatorial practice - as also for much Asian and Australasian practice - which can be received with increasing frequency because what it constituted and now constitutes is the product of a constructed ignorance. It is this ignorance which can be broken down to present different works. In a Euramerican world which with almost clockwork-like frequency sees ten-yearly retrospectives of Matisse or Cézanne, or in Asia and Australasia the semi-permanently recycled exhibitions of prominent 'national' and 'modern' artists, the exhibition of modern Asian art is a way of breaking out of this cycle. It also obviously moves exhibition decisions out of the hands of those controlling the previous structure of re-cycling. It has become the domain of personal, institutional, and in some cases national government ambition. Because modern Asian art is frequently unestablished in the site of reception, its transfer often means the accretion of value to the art works so transferred. This resembles a 'tournament of value' in the sense adumbrated by Appadurai.⁴ One knows too that behind the scenes curators are exchanging promissory notes about future exhibitions and the significance they give to the oeuvre of certain artists' work. This situation appears to resemble the deals on rate of exchange for promissory bills struck by medieval bankers at trade fairs in Europe.⁵ In these curious, nascent, and largely hidden circuits of exchange, art increasingly appears to be the currency of curator-to-curator or art site-to-art site exchange rather than simply a complex and curious cultural product which attracts its own cross-cultural community of interpreters. The judgements of a few mediators or facilitators at the interface between such reception sites and circuits of exchange may resemble the situation when in the 1920s Bernard Berenson wrote convenient authentications of dubious Renaissance art works for sale by Joseph Duveen.⁶ Transposed to the present situation for modern Asian art, the curator's opinion creates significance and often directly economic value in a work when it crosses cultural boundaries, rather than this being produced by the demand of any market or public patron for it before it crossed them.⁷

If the circulation of art works is not directly the result of economic processes, it is also perfectly clear that the sites and mediators of reception of modern Asian art are highly

determined socially and require large amounts of transfer payments in the form of sponsorship for them to function. Here one might distinguish private foundations, government funds, and corporate funding. This nexus of support whilst it will relate such circulation to the cultural, political, or economic goals of the sponsors -at the very least we must assume it will not contravene them - is not in any way like support to the producer via the purchase of art works by personal taste or through wider socially established canons of taste we might find in a commercial art gallery. It is also unlike the support for various kinds of 'difficult' avantgardist work in curated shows at non-commercial cultural centres. Not only is modern Asian art received at sites which situate it between cultures, it is also situated between very different kinds of cultural habitus.⁸ Indeed the ability of curators to mobilize resources for exhibitions and the ability to make these appeal to various sets of receiving constituencies is different in kind and extent to the kinds of skill with which they will exercise the aristocratic right of selection, or patronage without competition. The latter only arises when there are other patrons seeking the same works. Or, more exactly, the ability to select is a cultural good⁹ made attractive to those providing resources as a guarantee of quality signature on the final product, the exhibition. And the ability to secure resources is a cultural good made attractive to those providing works to the exhibition and a site to house it. How these cultural goods are translated into economic ones is a complex issue on a scale beyond that of the exhibition itself, but we should note that they provide at least economic rewards for some, beginning with the curators and some of the artists themselves.

C. Multilaterality of modern art flows

Partly because of the siting of cultural reception at home within a culture, and also partly because of the reality of the flow of art works from outside to inside, hitherto art historical approaches have tended to over-simplify this process as unilateral or one-way. In fact when we see curators as situated within a complex nexus of internal and external relations in which they may serve as referees about art from culture A to culture B and then perform the same function in reverse for art from culture B to culture A we can see that this process is, for some principal actors involved, a multilateral one. Selection for exhibition frequently benefits artists at home from the recognition and exhibition they receive overseas, and there are not a few cases where recognition overseas has come first, particularly in cultures where modern artists no longer take effective part in the national salon, or where there is no large scale system of grants to younger or mid-career artists. In other words what is conceived of usually as a process of intervention by external circuits in internal ones is actually a double articulation with the intervention of internal ones in external ones at the same time.

But we should also now be able to simultaneously see this process the other way around from a multilateral perspective. The reception of modern Asian art in other-than-Asian countries is not simply a passive acceptance by other-than-Asian art cultures, it is nevertheless a positive insertion into Euramerian discourses by the Asian art cultures themselves. Although still only partially realized, it is thereby an active self-defining process. In a certain sense the era has ended of selective transfer and appropriation - under various conditions and types of local autonomy - of European academy realism followed by various kinds of Euramerican modernism. One does not assume that what was produced was a phantom shadow around some pristine Euramerican model. In Asia, the circuits such art was imbricated within were almost all defined by local contexts, however much elements of the discourse they operated within came from Euramerica.

The exhibition of function of modern Asian art in Euramerica has multiple trajectories. The

first is to indicate a different history of modernity in art interstitial to Euramerica's contacts with Asia, a kind of locally determined hybrid. It is a presentation of a history of 'our' modernity and may involve the demonstration that modern Asian art has a different trajectory towards modernity or a different structuring of modernity in art as such. No doubt some art world people will tend to think there may be an 'Asian type' of modernity. However appealing it might be for nationalist purposes, such a retrospective conceptualization of Asian modernity in art is intellectually infeasible since the founding moment of Asian modernity is the relativization of numerous, horizontally differentiated art discourses by their contact with multiple Euramerican art discourses from the 1750s to 1930s. I think modern Asian art can only be a construct of historically reconceived structural similarities given this foundational moment.¹⁰

The second trajectory is towards the situating of modern Asian artists as equal participants in a circuit of exhibitions already established by Euramerica: the Venice and São Paulo Biennales, and the thematic show which includes Asian modernists as resident-participants in Euramerica, such as showing Nam-Jun Paik as a member of Fluxus without noticing his debts to early Korean surrealist poetry.¹¹ This of course means the subduing or bracketing of the Asian trace in the artist's or work's representation, and homogenizing Asian artists into an even field of actors. Even ostensibly re-founding Euramerican exhibitions such as *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, in parts of its layout effaced any highly distinct cultural trace from the juxtaposition or layout of works, other than those traces found in the work itself.

The third trajectory was seen in an attempt to found or secure the nascent foundations for a new circuit of exchange. This could go towards the assimilation of an international exhibition form into a new regionalist category, such as in the Fukuoka Asian Art shows and the Queensland *Asia-Pacific Triennale*. Or, it could go towards an establishment of modern Asian art discourses with work from other places such as Australia conveniently assimilable to its purview. This trajectory places Asian modernism in the centre of Euramerican art discourses as a model of otherness which might be followed by them, such as the Japanese Benesse Foundation-funded *TransCulture* at Venice in 1995. But even if for the moment these exhibitions have been benign or cooperative constructions and insertions, but one could also conceive of aggressive ones if they were to be allied to a nationalist or pan-regionalist culturalist belligerence.

Finally, I would like to mention a new kind of situation for an old figure in art exchanges. Perhaps art historians and curators themselves have tended to interpret the role of exhibition organizers and art entrepreneurs as mediating one culture's art products to another in a kind of middleman role familiar from trading practice over the centuries. This apparent familiarity may lead us to ignore an important difference with previous intermediaries. The value in culture A of its art products was once quite apparent to those in culture B and simply required a mediator or merchant to make them available on terms it could afford. Of course, these exchanges in history have always involved complex questions of what we might describe as the process by which one culture's exchange commodities became another culture's symbolic capital. For example, various kinds of highly culture-specific products such as textiles, ceramics, and painted screens, were certainly part of the customary tribute trade exchanges between Southeast Asia, China, and countries as far away as Persia in the 17th century.¹² The difference in modern art exchanges in the late 20th century is that the objects now exchanged only acquire exchange value by their selection and exhibition outside their originating culture, where they may not have functioned as commodities at all and simply been part of a reconstitution of symbolic capital.¹³ Furthermore they are only

exchanged as symbolic capital in the first instance since they move in and out of cultural centres without going on sale, however much their economic commodity value may increase in their culture of origin once the exchange through the external site has taken place. What they are exchanged for is another set of exchanges of symbolic capital, 'pre-modern,' 'modern' or 'contemporary,' in an intervention of culture B in culture A which moves in the other direction. The objects exchanged thus have a double articulation. As symbolic capital their exchange frequently endorses - one might anthropologically say prestates - the symbolic capital of the other. As received back, they are converted in actual exchange values when works go into a market, or are converted into potential exchange values by the transfer of symbolic value to like those objects outside restricted-access stores such as museums. Such 'exchangeable' objects may already be in potential exchange relationships, such as in the commercial art gallery or antique markets, but for these symbolic value is converted into exchange value by the transfer through the external circuit.

There are two figures at the centre of such exchanges who may not be nameable by a single entity or assignable role. One is the gatekeeper [entrepreneur, cultural official, dealer, curator] who directs and benefits from the flow of cultural goods inwards, as much as he or she is often exactly the same person in the world who intervenes or even directs the flow of cultural goods outwards. The second figure is the producer of cultural goods [artist, craftsperson] who tries to situate their work inside this circuit at the same time as they may continue personal exchange relations of work opportunities with other producers who can let the artist themselves be exchanged as symbolic capital which on its return becomes exchange capital through increased production opportunities. Thus one may see the increasingly elaborate series of international art competitions and artist residencies as part of circuit which the artist themselves intervenes in order to secure the conversion of their work, and then of their own status as a social unit, from symbolic into exchange value.

D. Conclusion

The formulations of the latter part of the above section are deliberately abstract in order to focus on important functions and figures which are in the process of merging in the definition and new self-definition of modern Asian art. They have to be articulated in an abstract sense here because on the one hand the writer may be accused of *ad hominem* criticism if particular individuals are named. On the other hand, it is important to realize such functions and figures are not self-transcendent individuals who can offer neutral value judgements about art objects they select or create. They are placed at new variations of old circuits of exchange in which their judgements are formed both by the structure of the circuit and also by their own interest in remaining at its interface with other circuits.

This has a quite definite consequence for art history and art criticism. All judgements of excellence which singularize modern Asian artists or works as representative of cultures, or of specific art discourses, but which do not articulate their locution against a specific and historically situated field of discourse, should be regarded as over-compromized by interest and hence suspect. But, in that such judgements may in the practice of the world be unavoidable, inevitable, or necessarily unconscious on the part of those who gatekeep or produce, one might call for more distance and neutrality about their relative importance on the part of those who make such judgements. Simply put, curators and artists should not be the blind servants of their own propaganda, particularly in nascent fields so easily subject to nationalist construction of a chauvinist kind or to opportunist entrepreneurial manipulation like the multilaterally constructed one of modern Asian art. It is simply not in the long-term interest of the various art discourses which constitute this, whether culture-bound or

cross-cultural, to allow this. This distance - if necessarily an engaged one - is equally important for those whose creative task is to subject such judgements and works to historical or critical analysis.

NOTES

⁰ Some of the views discussed here are given extended treatment in my other works: Editor and contributor, *Modernity in Asian Art*, Sydney, Wild Peony, 1993; *Modern Asian Art*, Sydney, Fine Arts Press, 1997; 'Art and its 'others' - recent Australian-Asian visual exchanges' [1993 & 1994], in Dever, Maryanne, ed., *Australia and Asia: cultural transactions*, Surrey, Curzon Press, 1997; 'Dilemmas of [dis-]attachment in the Chinese diaspora,' *Visual Art + Culture*, no.1, 1997.

¹ There is, incidentally, nothing strange about the elision of commercial manipulation of advertising images and the siting of exhibitions. This was immortalized, if I remember rightly, by Honda's advertisement on the slogan 'The Japanese Art of Car Making' around the time of *Japan Style*, a major Japan Foundation sponsored exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in the 1980s.

² See my paper 'Art and its 'others' - recent Australian-Asian visual exchanges' above.

³ My own research experience is that even when museum department records may be missing the Trustees' Minutes - when available - or equivalent contain much art historically valuable information for the reconstruction of such decisions.

⁴ See Appadurai, Arjun, 'Introduction: commodities and the politics of value' in Appadurai, Arjun, ed., *The Social Life of Things, commodities in social perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

⁵ See Braudel, F., *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, Volume I, The Structures of Everyday Life*, [tr.Reynolds, S.], London, Collins-Fontana, 1981, p.472-473.

⁶ On the activities of Joseph Duveen see Simpson, Colin, *Artful partners, The partnership : the secret association of Bernard Berenson and Joseph Duveen*, London, Bodley Head, 1987; Fowles, Edward, *Memories of Duveen Brothers*, London: Times Books, 1976; Duveen, James Henry, *The rise of the house of Duveen*, London, Longmans Green, 1957.

⁷ See the interview with David Hansen and Jean-Hubert Martin, 'A view from the Centre,' *Art Monthly Australia*, no.48 April & no.51 July 1992.

⁸ That is '...principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any being the product of obedience to rules..'. See Bourdieu, P., *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, (1972, translated by Nice, R.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.72.

⁹ A 'cultural' good may be defined as any object which owes its value primarily to its status as a marker of symbolic capital and only secondarily as a commodity in any circuit of exchange. It is one found in 'a social formation in which the absence of symbolic-product-conserving techniques associated with literacy retards the objectification of symbolic and particularly cultural capital.' See Bourdieu, 1977, p.89. The notion is clearly and directly applicable to art exchanges between different cultures if we substitute 'cultural legibility' for 'literacy' in Bourdieu's formulation.

¹⁰ The advent of such an historical reconstruction can be seen in papers from the 1991 Canberra Conference, see Clark, 1993. It is to the great credit of various Japanese institutions that whilst exhibitions based on such perspectives have been envisioned elsewhere they were first concretely realized in exhibitions in Japan such as: the historical retrospectives in the Fukuoka Asian Art exhibitions of 1979, 1980, 1985, 1989, and 1994; the historical retrospective sections in the Asian Modernism exhibition at the Japan Foundation's Asia Centre in 1995; the recent splendid Fukuoka survey *The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia: Artists and Movements*.

¹¹ See Robert J. Fouser's paper on Paik Nam-Jun delivered at the 2nd Asia Pacific Conference on Korea Studies, University of Sydney, July 1996, and scheduled for publication in the conference papers.

¹² Among gifts sent by the King of Siam to the King of France as early as 1686 were 'Two Umbrellas (in fact screens, Japon wood, containing six leaves, which is a Present sent by the Emperour of Japon to the King of Siam), see *Harangues faites à sa Majesté et au Princes et Princesses de la Maison Royale pas les Ambassadeurs du Roy de Siam a leur première audience et à leur audience de conge*, Paris, 1687 [tr.and ed. by Smithies, M., as *The Discourses at Versailles of the First Siamese Ambassadors to France, 1686-7, together with the list of their presents to the court*, Bangkok, The Siam Society, 1986].

¹³ See Bourdieu, 1977 above, p.171-183

A Trap in Multiculturalism

Tatehata Akira

Professor, Tama Art University

I would like to start this lecture with a thesis that may be thought of as somewhat polemic. It is something of a dissenting view on the issue of installations in the contemporary art of Asia.

It is well-known that installations are a major part of the contemporary art of Asia, especially East and Southeast Asia. However, it seems that, without sufficient discussion, many people have come to accept the idea that this approach is something that belongs inherently to Asia. It is thought that installations emerged spontaneously and naturally in connection with the local ethnic and cultural traditions of each region as opposed to the dichotomy of painting and sculpture imported from the West, and therefore that installations have a strongly regional and indigenous quality.

It is true that the installations of Asian artists reflect the different cultures and ethnic practices of Asia in technique, materials, relationship with ordinary life, and sense of space. However, I do not think that a careless conclusion should be drawn from this fact about the origins of the method. This simplistic sort of thinking is a trap which multiculturalism needs to avoid. If we are not careful, it may distort our view of contemporary Asian art and our understanding of history.

In order to clarify this issue, I would like to present my "dissenting view." Whether the artists are aware of it or not, the methodology of the installation was suggested directly or indirectly by postwar American and European art. It is difficult to prove this definitively, and it may not be wise to a blanket generalization, but I think there is a reason for making this claim in order to oppose the narrow viewpoint that sees the indigenous qualities of regional practices and historical developments as self-contained.

I have two main objections to the idea that installations developed spontaneously in Asia. The first is that a tradition unrelated to the dichotomy of painting and sculpture, an archetype of the installation approach, cannot be found in modern or premodern times in any region I know of. The second problem is that it is difficult to explain why installations emerged all over Asia at about the same time in the seventies if this type of art is entirely indigenous to regional cultures.

It may be true that Asian artists did not have many sources of information about events taking place at the same time in other parts of the world, but they were able to gain some knowledge about the trend of installation art in Europe and the United States through printed materials and people going back and forth. Although the circumstances may have varied for different countries, it would be reasonable to suppose that this influence was one factor in motivating Asian artists to create environmental works. Indeed, we have the testimony of the members of the New Art Movement in Indonesia and the Stars group in China, who made the first installations in those countries in the late seventies, that they intended to find a contemporary application of Dadaism.

It may be objected that the trend toward installations emerged out of mutual contacts between Asian artists, but in reality there was very little of this type of interaction in Asia prior before the seventies. Many of the artists who participated in the shows of Asian contemporary art

sponsored by the Fukuoka Art Museum and the Japan Foundation, which began in the eighties, have said that it was through these shows that they first made contact with artists from other Asian countries.

Some people might respond to my argument as follows. You say there is no forerunner to the installation form. However, there are many elements in the contemporary installations of Asia which are similar to the paraphernalia of traditional festivals and religious rituals. In almost all instances, they include items used in daily life or trees or other natural materials from the region. Therefore, since installations differ from the practices of sculpture and painting brought in from the West in modern times, they should be seen as a form of expression that comes into its own by rejecting the influence of the West and restoring indigenous qualities.

I believe, however, that the opposite is the case. Although installations may be used to restore ethnic and traditional elements, this was only possible after the fact, after the installation approach had been introduced. The territory of the installation did not emerge spontaneously or inevitably out of Asian culture. And in view of the avant-garde intentions originally held by most of the artists, it would be unnatural to see this development as a direct return to tradition.

Even in the United States and Europe, the history of installations does not go back very far. The word itself did not enter the jargon of art until the sixties, and the first works in this style only go back to the twenties with the Merz constructions of Kurt Schwitters. The installation does not constitute a particular movement in art history, and it has never been an independent genre. It might be thought of as a convenient general name for hard-to-define forms of expression which lie outside the boundaries of the established genres.

Asian installations were able to become an indigenous form, even if they had originated in the West, because they provided an easy approach for artists who were subject to few restrictions from history or an established system, and it could be used quite flexibly with a bricolage technique to bring in ethnic or traditional elements. Even if installations can represent multiculturalism in art, this is only a result, not a necessary characteristic, of the method. As a method, the installation should be understood within a broader contemporary field of reference.

*

Multiculturalism is a way of thinking that actively promotes diversity. Originally, it was given the task of expanding the possibilities of communication through greater tolerance. However, when it is applied to the cultures of Asia or the Third World, it can be used to sanctify indigenism as an inviolable quality and lead to arguments that make cultural differences from the West absolute. There is a danger that this stance, while extolling the virtues of cultural diversity, may lead to an intolerant ideology which claims that interpretation of cultures is impossible.

For example, cubism is often said to be a colonialist exploitation of primitive art. At first glance, this rhetoric seems acceptable. It is true of course that when Picasso was inspired by African masks, he took little interest in their cultural underpinnings. He may have known nothing about their use or even which tribe had made them. This rhetorical criticism of cultural exploitation advocates a morality which appeals to a naive sense of justice. This view holds that understanding of another culture should only be permitted within the original context of that culture as if this were self-evident.

However, when the original goals of multiculturalism are taken into consideration, is this

criticism of the cubists actually justified? If the same morality is required of artists as of anthropologists doing field work, it becomes almost impossible to make any sort of reference to another culture. If it is thought ultimately impossible for artists to accept other cultures as a whole, they would have to completely give up any sort of communication involving other cultures.

If multiculturalism is a tolerant philosophy of cultural relativism, we should allow Picasso's use of outside inspiration as a form of communication. In another example, we should be able to appreciate the white and green celadon pottery of Korea according to our own notions of beauty without knowing whether they were used at court or by the common people. People outside Japan should be able to respond to Rinpa-school painting and ukiyo-e without knowing about its place in Japanese society. We cannot use multiculturalism to combat intolerance unless we have faith in the possibility of sharing some values while maintaining the premise of regional or ethnic cultural differences.

*

Now to come back to the theme of installations. I certainly do not mean to deny or disparage the special characteristics of contemporary Asian art by the position I have taken on the origins of the installation. I simply want to point out the danger of thinking that cultural purity can be obtained by subtracting the influences of other cultures, the idea that an indigenous culture can exist in a self-sufficient, self-contained way.

In closing, I would like to point out one interesting fact. Whether or not the artists intended it, there is a strong cubist influence in the paintings of the fifties in Indonesia, Thailand, and India. The cubist influence in Japan came in a different period. A comparative investigation of the way this influence was handled in these different countries would be a very interesting topic of study from a fundamentally multiculturalist point of view. Unfortunately, I do not have the expertise necessary to discuss this issue right now.

(Translated by Stanley N. Anderson)