

cluded the very strong historical component. In fact, it has been thought that the historical component would be seen as negatively geared towards the success of the exhibition because the work in the 19th century, in the colonial period in Southeast Asia, or in the early modernism period in Japan would be seen as derivative by European and American critics. Do you notice this difference very strongly? Is it because there is a stronger sense of history based on the colonial past?

K. Kwok: I think your characterization of differences is certainly correct. We probably need to discuss that a little bit more. Perhaps one way of looking at the issue is looking at it from the point of view of Singapore Art Museum. We, coming from institutions: one, put a lot more emphasis on community participation; two, tend to engage the whole artistic community of the countries or the cities that we are working in; three, are concerned with the funding structure. The Fukuoka Art Museum, a municipal art museum and Singapore Art Museum, a national art gallery, need to look at a larger range of art practices, in other words, the 20th century in its totality. These are possible indications to explain the difference.

MC (A. Poshyananda): You talk about specific context and artist community, art institutions and museums, often seen as spaces of conventions and control. Have you found problems regarding decorum, ethics and censorship in Singapore?

K. Kwok: Well, do you mean an art institution being a double-edged sword? It has a sense of decorum but it certainly opens up possibilities so it has dual characteristics. Yes, it is very natural of any institution of a national status.

MC (A. Poshyananda): For our last speaker today, it's my great pleasure to introduce Mr. Ushiroshoji Masahiro. Mr. Ushiroshoji has been the curator of the Fukuoka Art Museum since 1978. He has organized the four semiennial Asian Art Shows in Fukuoka, and has curated the show which is now on at the Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum, "The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia: Artists and Movements." He is also organizing the First Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial, which will open in 1999. Please welcome Mr. Ushiroshoji.

Ushiroshoji Masahiro: Recently, I find that when I appear at these occasions, I tend to be introduced as a curator who has been involved in Asian contemporary art for a long time, for example, 20 years. I feel like I am aging, but please be reminded that I am only as old as Mr. Kwok.

Currently, there is an on-going project to open a municipal museum dedicated to Asian art. We are yet to decide on the name, so we tentatively call it the Asian Art Gallery. I would like to speak to you, today, about how this gallery came into existence and what kind of activities we are in planning.

What you see here is the building plan (slide). It looks like an enormous building, but most of it will become part of a shopping complex and the museum will occupy the 7th and the 8th floor.

The floors below us were initially planned to become a department store, but the final plan is to build a "super brand city" or a "mega-brand city" instead. In other words, all the European brand boutiques will fill the space. It is quite ironic that a museum that specializes in Asian art, yet to be fully recognized, and a "super brand city," which will be filled with well-known goods, will be sharing the floors in the same building. But this is reality, and it is a very cynical reality. I call this, as in Chinese contemporary art, "cynical realism."

The Asian Art Gallery aims to build on the activities, and the accumulation of knowledge and experience in Asian art, that the Fukuoka Art Museum has been able to build up through the years. The basic philosophy will also be expanded and further developed through the Asian Art Gallery. It is like a baby which has been nourished in the womb of the museum and is now about to be born. In speaking about the Asian Art Gallery, we first need to look back at the activities carried out during the past 20 years by the Fukuoka Art Museum, the mother institution. You remember the days when you were younger much better when you grow old. Therefore, I would like to start by going back 20 years in time.

The Fukuoka Art Museum opened in 1979 amid the rush to construct museums by municipal and prefectural governments all over Japan (fig. 17). The inaugural exhibition was "Asian Artists Exhibition Part I: Modern Asian Art—India, China, Japan" (1979). At that time, public museums were sprouting up like mushrooms after a rain, most of them collecting modern art from Europe and the United States. 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.

The Fukuoka Art Museum already had a collection of ancient oriental art which was unusually substantial for a regional museum (fig. 18), and it was also quick in collecting post-war art from inside and outside Japan. Therefore, the collection was both varied and extensive, but the museum was still seeking a better-defined and an original direction for its programs.

When the museum opened in the late 70s, there was a growing tendency to reassess the conventional view of modern art history which placed the West at the center. In 1973, the seventh conference of the IAA (International Association of Art), a UNESCO organization, passed a resolution stating that the "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."

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. The gold seal (slide), which is a national treasure, is known as one of the first historic artifacts which is said to have been granted to a ruler, a ruler of a kingdom in the Fukuoka region around 57 A.D. This has been historically

authenticated as the evidence of exchange between the mainland and Japan. The exchange of artifacts and of persons and of people, and the Mongolian army's attempt to invade Japan by attempting a landfall at Fukuoka is depicted in this painting (slide). Fukuoka was also important as a military base in invading other countries.

Because of the geographical and historical significance of Fukuoka, the Japan National Committee of the IAA approached the Fukuoka Art Museum with the idea of devoting its inaugural exhibition to Asian art.

Art exchange with other Asian countries also became one of our museum activities. This slide shows one of the curators on a research trip to India in 1977 (slide). You see a member of IAA, Terada Takeo, here. The members of the IAA worked with us to plan our exhibition.

This is a brief summary of how the Asian art show was first launched at the Fukuoka Art Museum. We had our first show before planning to hold a series of these shows, so we did not call the show "The First" then, but the first exhibition came in two parts. The first part was the "Asian Artists Exhibition Part I : Modern Asian Art—India, China, Japan" held in 1979 which was a historical survey of the modern art in India, China and Japan. The second part, "Asian Artists Exhibition Part II : Festival : Contemporary Art Show, 1980," opened the year after, and covered the contemporary arts of the whole Asian region.

The second exhibition of Asian art was in 1985, the third in 1989, and the fourth in 1994. So we have held the show every five years. The fifth Asian Art Show will inaugurate the new Asian Art Gallery in 1999, and the exhibition name will be changed to "Fukuoka Triennial." The exhibitions are all called *Ajia Bijutsuten* in Japanese. But in English only the first show was titled "Asian Artists Exhibition"; the title from the second one on has been "Asian Art Show."

Dr. Desai mentioned that somebody asked, "Is there contemporary art in India?" We were asked a similar question, "Is there such a thing as contemporary art in Asia?" not by the public but, mostly, by art professionals. But this is an old story now. It really does remind you how much time has passed since then.

So although it has been a gradual process, we have continued to research, collect material and build a network of personal contacts. By purchasing major works shown in the exhibitions, the museum has now 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 focusing on Asian art have laid 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. This philosophy will be the backbone of the gallery.

For example, our attitude is to see the art work in its own context rather than in comparison to European or American works. We also try not to limit ourselves by only selecting what looks like contemporary art or what looks like art.

I would like to mention the early stages of Asian art exhibitions. From the start, our Asian art exhibitions were organized

with a definite, unified point of view. Instead of trying to convey a certain message, these exhibitions were 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 reason for this orientation was the involvement of the IAA, an extremely broad-based artists' organization. Another reason was that our staff 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 Art Show was seen primarily as an international cultural exchange program separate from the main activities of the museum. This means that it was not part of the regular acquisition and exhibition programs. This reflects 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, this dualistic viewpoint remained intact at the initial stage and we did not know how to present Asian art in that context.

Looking back at the history of the Asian art exhibition from the standpoint of the organizers, I would say that it began as a festival and matured into an art exhibition. This process is also a history of our institution gaining independence and leadership.

This process is reflected in the method of selecting works to be included in the exhibitions. For the first and second exhibition, the task of selecting works was turned over to the countries of origin. From the third exhibition on, we determined a general theme to integrate the entire exhibition. Then each country nominated artists and works according to the theme, and we made the final selection in order to organize the entire exhibition. In the fourth exhibition, the works were divided into groups with similar themes rather than organizing them Olympic-style, in country-by-country displays.

Thus, we were able to take the initiative in organizing the exhibition from the initial stage of selecting the artists to building the framework of the show. In other words our show was able to evolve from a "festival" to an "exhibition." In the same way, the Asian Art Show gradually moved from the periphery to the center of the museum's activities.

The Fourth Asian Art Show developed out of a change in emphasis from "exoticism" to "contemporary expression." Initially, the people who came to see the Asian Art Show were expecting to see unusual forms of art from the "Southern Islands." Most people held a stereotypical view that the West provided "the model," that Japanese art was "derivative" of that model, and furthermore, that Asian art was "backward." Not only the audience but our own curators, who organized the exhibition, held this entrenched view of a "backward Asia," and saw the contemporary art of Asia as something strange and exotic.

Also, the artists of Asia themselves faced similar situations. At that time, they were frantically searching for a "national identity." What are the unique qualities of the art of our country? In many young countries, which are still in the process of establishing a new nation state after independence, the search for national identity is a major issue. The artists have also started to seek a basis for the uniqueness of Asian art, apart 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. This work of the Thai artist in this slide is an example taken from our Asian Art Show in 1980 (slide).

The public, the curators and the artists all sought this exotic image of Asia. The history of our Asian art exhibition has been the history of a struggle with 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. Asia was no longer viewed as either a paradise or a "backward" region, but a contemporary society where people live in happiness and in sorrow.

The dualistic framework of the West versus Japan, original art versus derivative art, was reassessed. We developed an attitude where we would look at Asian art, not in the context of Western discourse, but in the Asian cultural context.

The Fourth Asian Art Show was an important experience leading to the birth of the Asian Art Gallery. We invited the artists to stay at the Fukuoka Art Museum to participate in workshops, performances and lectures. The exhibition was enlivened by live performances and other activities (fig. 19). This was a big change from the static exhibitions we held in the past. We also presented a special show, "Rickshaw Painting—Traffic Art in Bangladesh," and presented 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" (fig. 20).

The approach of the new Asian Art Gallery was developed out of the experience of four Asian Art Shows and the 20-year history of the Fukuoka Art Museum. It will be unique in two ways.

First, we will focus on the modern Asia, comparing the modern and historical eras in reconsidering the value system of modernity. Modernization was westernization in non-Western countries, including these of Asia. The word and the concept of *bi-*

jutsu (art) was produced in the process of modernization or westernization. We will examine the evolution of Asian art through modernization and Westernization.

"The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia: Artists and Movement," currently showing at the Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum is being held as a preliminary event.

We are also going to collect and exhibit those objects and forms which have been excluded from the category of "art" works during the process of modernization=Westernization. Rickshaw paintings of Bangladesh is one example. Other examples include India's company school, the souvenir-like trade painting of China, folk art and popular art. We would like to re-examine modernity in Asia through these excluded objects. We would like to perceive modernity in Asia from a multiple perspective instead of a dualistic Europe-versus-Japan perspective, or the hierarchical perspective in modern art where painting and sculpture are placed at the top of the pyramid.

Second, our museum is not going to be about the building, but about the activities it undertakes in its function as a center for interaction with the community surrounding us. We are planning artist-in-residence and curator-in-residence programs to support this idea. Exhibitions will not be quiet, self-contained packages, but the dynamic and lively implementation of a variety of art activities.

This slide shows a scene from a workshop of Indian folk art painting for children that was held as another pre-opening event (fig. 21). Activities that go beyond the conventions of museums at both a physical and conceptual level—collaboration with the local community, exhibitions sent outside the museum, artists visiting schools, etc.—will be our focus. Such attempts shall resolve the issue of the "West versus Japan" discourse or the West-centric view of the world.

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, including forms of art which previously had no place in the museum, into the overall system of our museum programs. As a result, the birth of our new Asian Art Gallery will proceed naturally.

MC (A. Poshyananda): You have talked about the evolution and the experience of organizing the Asian Art Shows, and you have talked eloquently regarding the shift from the exotic art festival to the authentic, in this case, the Asian Art Show. Looking from Fukuoka, Asia is no longer the "exotic South" but becoming more of "us." By collecting and showing ourselves, you have given us the enlightening views of looking at and collecting ourselves. Now, regarding the coming Triennial in 1999, I'm very interested in having you talk about the curator or curators who will be working on this team. It's going to be different from the Kwangju Biennale and the Asia-Pacific Triennial because Fukuoka will focus solely on Asia. Now, will you be using curators from all over Japan, or will they come mainly from Fukuoka? And will you be looking from the view of Japanese

gazing at Asia, or will be you be working with co-curators?

M. Ushiroshoji : Because the presentation was very short, I might have over-emphasized certain points. I explained how we started our exhibitions by getting help from the local curators to select and coordinate artists but became more active and started taking the initiative. We do not have as sophisticated an organization as in the Asia-Pacific Triennial operation. Language is one of our problems and we would have trouble communicating with co-curators at a detailed level. We would like to encourage dialog and co-curatorship so that we would not be on our own in setting up the entire exhibition.

MC (A. Poshyananda) : You showed some interesting slides regarding the use of, for example, the Indian craftswoman working with children, and asking artists to participate with the community. For example, Navin Rawanchaikul would be working with the community in Fukuoka. You're already blurring the zones between folk artifacts and authentic art. Would there be a lot of this in the upcoming Fukuoka Triennial?

M. Ushiroshoji : I think that that's the direction that we would like to pursue.

Particularly, with the Fourth Asian Art Show, we exhibited rickshaw painting, which was not "art" but was "artistic." We sought to find significance in bringing the rickshaw from the streets into the museum. But the museum framework is so overwhelming that once the rickshaw is put in a museum, it becomes a piece of art. In the attempt to break this barrier, we need to look into the direction where we can interact with the world outside of our museum.

Question (V.N. Desai) : My question is regarding the audience response to your exhibitions. When you had people like Bauwa Devi, the Indian woman from Mitila, who was doing demonstrations, or the rickshaw paintings, were the general audience more receptive compared to the so-called Westernized, modern and contemporary works from the Asian region? If that was so, would you comment on your thoughts?

M. Ushiroshoji : Let me quote the numbers first to answer that question. Mr. Kwok of SAM mentioned that their inaugural show of Asian art attracted only half the audience of the Guggenheim show. The exhibition "The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia," now at the Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum in Tokyo, attracted 7,000 visitors in Fukuoka, whereas the exhibition of Pompei attracted 200,000.

From my experience in the last four Asian Art Show exhibitions, the visitors were initially families and passers-by who were interested in the curious and exotic art from the South or Asia. But at the our Fourth Asian Art Show ("Realism as an Attitude"), I encountered people who were concerned with listening to the messages of the Asian artists.

Also, exhibits of rickshaw painting or Mitila seemed to have intrigued many of our visitors compared to the so-called contem-

porary art.

Question (J. Clark) : You spoke about the 1989 Third Asian Art Show, and the fact that you introduced the concept where the Fukuoka Art Museum decided upon the basic overall theme and then chose the art and the artists who were to be exhibited. I'm interested in understanding more about the motivation of why you felt that you had to decide on an overall general theme. Also, when you did the actual selection process, who had the decision-making authority? What was the process? Could you please talk about the organization of how you did that?

M. Ushiroshoji : The first two Asian Art Shows, with few exceptions, were totally ignored by the media and also by the critical audience. We actually did not curate the show. We simply brought together art which had been selected by the individual countries to show at our venue. We were criticized and we, ourselves, were very aware of that criticism.

Also, because we asked each of the participating countries to make the selections themselves, a diverse range of art, to put it mildly, or rather, a collection of art at many different levels and degrees of quality was put on display. The disparity motivated us to provide a kind of signpost to guide the audience, like a compass in rough seas, and so we gave the exhibition a theme, such as "Symbolic Visions in Contemporary Asian Life" at our Third Asian Art Show. The theme functioned as a reference point for the audience rather than a policy for selecting the works for the exhibition.

The Japanese decision making system is thought to be centered around consensus. But in comparing my experience in meetings in Brisbane to the ones in Japan, I notice that the decision maker in a Japanese organization is actually a single person or a small group of people who becomes anonymous after the decision is made. Usually it is a single curator making all the decisions. For the third and the fourth Asian Art Show, I was the person developing the concept. In Japan, you do not speak up and say, "I did it." If it is a public institution, like my museum, there are committees, etc., to support the consensus-building-process. If you are asked "Who was responsible?" in public, your response would be, naturally, "Everybody."

Question : Looking at the Asian art shows in Japan, I certainly feel that "Japan" is excluded from Asia. Even now, when you speak of Asian art, I see no attempt to place Japan into this context. How can you understand Asia without examining Japan in the context of Asia or to question Japan's identity or its position in Asia? How do museums deal with the issue of Japan in the context of Asia?

M. Ushiroshoji : Your point is valid. We have a section on Japan in our Asian Art Show. We select Japanese artists who fit the theme, not to emphasize "Japan versus Asia" but to view Japanese art in the context of the Asian region.

At our new Asian Art Gallery, we are not going to collect Japanese art. If the Asian Art Gallery was the only museum in

Fukuoka, we may be criticized for that because we might be exoticizing Asia or excluding Japan from "Asia." We would lead ourselves into a very dangerous zone if that were the case. But the Asian Art Gallery is an annex to the Fukuoka Art Museum, both administered under the umbrella of Fukuoka Art Museum, which already has a collection of Japanese art and will continue to do so.

Many ideas emerged when we were working on the concept of an Asian art gallery. There were suggestions to make the current Fukuoka Art Museum into a museum specializing in Asian art and to build a new museum for a Western art collection. Some people supported this idea as the result of the natural evolution of our museum. I think that there is an inherent paradox in our hundred-years-history of modernization in Japan, where we started from Westernizing ourselves and separating the rest of Asia from us. We are still trapped in that twisted frame of mind.

This may sound somewhat paradoxical, but by establishing the Asian Art Gallery we are bringing to light many of these contradictory elements in our attitude toward Asia that had not been so obvious before. I believe that this may be the true significance of the new gallery.

<Interval>

Discussion

MC (A. Poshyananda): We've heard five very stimulating papers by our distinguished speakers, who shared with us practical issues and problems involved in exhibiting and collecting contemporary Asian art. For this panel session, I urge the audience to question our speakers as well as discussion among the panelists themselves. Many important points have been raised regarding problems and strategies in representing contemporary Asian art in the West, as well as in Asia. Here, I would like to remind us of another piece of writing by James Clifford, *Museums as Contact Zones*:

"Museums can be spaces and zones of culture exchange, affiliation, culture promotion, as well as debate, reconciliation, and confrontation. At times, cultural understanding needs patience and depth."

I would like to begin our discussion by asking Dr. Desai, Dr. Turner and Mr. Murray to talk about their shared experience concerning the gap between the local audience and foreign art. What are the main problems in attracting the audience or the sponsors, for that matter, to come to exhibitions, and then to grasp some of the issues which, to them, may be totally irrelevant to their everyday life, but allow viewers to cross these zones. There are always dangers of, as we have discussed, the exoticization of the "other." What are the strategies to keep these inter-related issues in balance? For instance, if the works are full of disputes, diaspora, class, race conflicts, viewers may be driven away as their desire is to see a beautiful Asia or the smiles of the East.

V.N. Desai: In considering museums as cultural zones, one of

the words or phrases that a friend of mine who is the director of the Walker Art Center uses is, "Museums are to be considered as safe places where unsafe ideas can be explored." We should think of museums, not so much as the paradigm of citadels of the Greek model, but really as places where ideas, issues, and other things come together through our exhibitions and all of our programming. It is a center where things happen. Because we are a culturally specific institution, where we only show things from Asia, people come to us wanting to learn something about Asia.

Now, that has both a plus and a minus point. The plus is that people are at least somewhat prepared. They come to the Asia Society not to look for Western art or to look at African art. They know what they are coming for. On the other hand, the negative point is, as I tried to suggest in my presentation, they are expecting a certain kind of Asia. How do you disrupt that? You just have to be patient. I was very gratified to hear from our colleague from Fukuoka that it took them 20 years. It might take us five or ten. Things are always changing, but you just have to be patient. Initially, the audiences might not be there, but the fact that for "Traditions/Tensions," the audiences were far greater than what we had for "Asia/America" (our earlier contemporary art exhibition in 1994), we realize that there was much more attention given to this show for various kinds of reasons. I think this is very gratifying. You just have to recognize that anytime you change, anytime you subvert the usual expectations and norms, you have to expect that it's going to take time.

C. Turner: I agree with Dr. Desai's comments. Museums should be a place where controversial ideas can be discussed, but in a way that is not threatening. We had no idea about the response of our audience. But 60,000 people for the first exhibition, and then 120,000 for the second is, I think, some indication of audience expectations having been met and kept growing. Particularly, the exhibitions have been used very thoroughly by schools, so many of the visitors were school children who were brought in groups.

I think that Mr. Ushiroshoji made the most important point. We do have to take time to develop knowledge among our audience. I think that the first audience that came had little knowledge of what to expect. One of the things that was very stimulating for them was the artist talks. Almost all the artists talked about their work, and we videotaped that. For the second exhibition, those talks were played throughout the exhibition and people could listen to an artist talk of their choice. I think that the education program is very important. We've talked a great deal in our museum about what sort of information we can supply to people.

But at the same time, there are some difficulties with that, and we've adopted a policy with our education program, at the moment, that in interpreting the work, we are not going further than what the artist wants to say about the work. Certainly, our Australian audiences are very used to asking artists direct questions, for example, "Is this work a criticism of the government of your country?" The artists have taken that on board and responded as they wished to respond in those circumstances. I think that there is an engagement that goes on between the artist and the viewer,

and between the artwork and the viewer. It's very important that curators and education staff in museums try to make some attempts to bridge that, but not to force the way that people interpret art works. It's certainly true that in the First Asia-Pacific Triennial, the most popular works were definitely the paintings. I suppose people felt more comfortable with that. Overall, I think the audience is growing in sophistication. But it will take time.

G. Murray : At our gallery, we have an extensive education and access program which included public forums like lectures and workshops, and other ways of extending the audience. If I can take one example, the "Liquid Crystal Futures" exhibition of Japanese contemporary photographers, there was a, to use the Scottish words, big "stushie" world, but there were no women artists in the exhibition. Many of the Scottish female artists questioned this. Luckily, Yuko Hasegawa, one of the curators attended the forum and she was able to answer this particular question. Another issue was some of the images that appeared in the work of Nobuyoshi Araki. I had a lot of problems from some of our female staff who objected to Araki's depiction of women. That was a big issue.

MC (A. Poshyananda) : Can you elaborate that? How big?

G. Murray : They would not accept that his art did not debase the image of women to satisfy and titillate the male gaze...

Question : I'd like Mr. Murray to explain why the only female member of the board was made responsible for answering that question?

G. Murray : Because she was the most intelligent.

Question : And could you tell us what her response was?

G. Murray : Well in the first question asking why there were no female artists in that exhibition. She said, "Yes, there were many excellent younger female artists working in Japan who in due course would most certainly appear in future exhibitions."

Question : Just to continue, did some of the less intelligent members of the committee have a response?

G. Murray : This was unnecessary as it had been successfully answered.

MC (A. Poshyananda) : Perhaps, Mr. Kwok and Mr. Ushiroshoji can discuss their experience in terms of local audience, Singaporean and Japanese respectively, in viewing contemporary Asian art. Do the local viewers pay equal attention to art from their neighboring countries compared to say exhibitions which could be seen as, "rebirth of exoticism," like the Guggenheim Collection, or the paintings from Pompeii, Leonardo da Vinci, or contemporary German art?

K. Kwok : Because the large part of our education is in the English language, the notion of art, especially modern art and/or contemporary art, is associated with Matisse, Picasso and so on, which is not surprising at all. However, because Asian art is something which is close to us—take the experience of organizing the "Modernity and Beyond" exhibition that we did—people who were close to the exhibition all ended up appreciating the works very much, even though when they first saw them, they were questioning why we were doing this. In other words, I think that at the surface of things, we will still need a channel to bring people into the museum, whatever the notions that people have about art. Gradually, there will be many opportunities for the museum to introduce Asian contemporary art. This will take a little bit of time.

M. Ushiroshoji : As mentioned by Dr. Turner in her presentation, the role of education is important to enhance the relationship between works of art and the audience. The problem with the word "education," in Japanese, is that it sounds too pedagogic. We should not be an authority to educate the people, but should facilitate programs and provide a cultural context for the work so that people can understand the work better.

For example, a certain kind of work by an Islamic artist from Malaysia looks like a kind of formalism or an abstract art, but in fact, it embodies specific signs of Islamic religion. One can appreciate the art as a purely abstract work, but the work can be better understood if the curator can provide information on the cultural context of such work.

I sometimes encounter criticism that the Asian Art Show provides too much wall text to explain the art. If it were American contemporary art, maybe such information is unnecessary because there is no need. But with art from the Philippines, for example, we need some information because we hardly learn anything about the country in our education system, even though it is a neighboring country. This gap does exist. So, when we do exhibit art of the Philippines, we must provide some information about their history. It is inevitable that we would have more text.

V.N. Desai : I want to talk about what Mr. Ushiroshoji just said. In the Western contemporary world, particularly, there is a tendency to think that we must not have any interpretation. Often, one would say that Matisse does not need an interpretation. Why do we need to put all the information out when we deal with non-Western contemporary art? I know many of my colleagues in the art museum world in America are beginning to question this tendency which is almost the innate elitism of the Western contemporary art world. The notion that many audiences who come to the museum would understand Matisse without knowing any cultural specificity, or that they could understand Turner without knowing anything, is actually as much of a misnomer, as it is for people who look at contemporary Asian art or for that matter traditional Asian art.

We had a very interesting experience when we had the contemporary Asian American show on one floor and then had Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, an exhibition focused on a very beautiful

ful 7th-century sculpture from Southeast Asia, on another floor. Many people and critics commented how much they loved the labels in the traditional show. The same people actually criticized our having words in the contemporary show. Part of it has to do with conventions. I know, also, there is a problem with the artists. I have number of artist friends who have said, "I don't want interpretations. Let my work speak for itself." While there is some validity to that particular attitude, it's very problematic because we don't have many shared conventions or cultural attitudes in the world we live in. Oftentimes, it's not simply that our visitors don't know something about the cultural specificity of Asian art in the West, they really don't know much about how to look at a work of art. I feel that they need whatever help they can get. If there are people who don't want to read anything, don't. Who is forcing you? It's okay if you can just look at the work and understand it. We need to develop strategic interpretation, which is not too wordy, or does not close down the interpretation, but an association that allows you to look at the work in multiple ways. That's a challenge for museums no matter what art they deal with.

MC (A. Poshyananda) : Would anybody else like to talk about pedagogy or education?

G.Murray : We are planning an exhibition next year which is going to be of very small paintings and very large explanations.

MC (A. Poshyananda) : Conceptual?

G. Murray : Yes.

Question (J. Clark) : Can I slightly change the direction of the question? There's a very famous statement by Jean-Hubert Martin in an Australian Art Magazine about which artists were important and he immediately quoted twelve known artists as if they were the only artists that were worth looking at anywhere in the world. It's a phenomenon which I shall give a cute name to, but which is never really discussed. It's called "curatorial transcendentalism."

Why are these people allowed to choose? If we know that certain people are going to do the choosing, we know almost certainly what work they will choose. It seems that the structure of modern exhibitions is largely constructed around choices of curators. It is not choices of the works, even though a variety of works of art are going through certain kinds of selection procedures. I would like the mask to be dropped slightly by our museum gallery and curatorial colleagues. I would like some more frank discussion about why certain people get chosen to choose art, because we know in the Australian case that the ultimate decisions are made by the national committee, and that some of the national committee members are also the country curators, who are actually the ones who choose work from some of the countries. I'm not exactly sure what the relation was in "Traditions/Tensions," but there was only one curator we're told. For example, in the case of Japanese art going out of Japan, when certain

people have been the curators we know what kind of work they are going to choose. So why are those people chosen?

MC (A. Poshyananda) : That's very good. Who chooses the choosers?

V.N. Desai : I was the one who selected Apinan. We were very up-front. At the meeting in 1992, there was a very strong feeling that we should have one curator, and not a committee. I was not going in that direction when we had initially thought about it.

It seemed to me that there were a number of criteria that I was looking for from very early on. This exhibition, unlike many other exhibitions, was in the making for a long time.

One, I wanted to have a voice from within the region. I was not going to have an American or a Western curator based in an American museum going into the region. Two, I was interested in having a person who would be able to go back and forth between the regions, among the regions, as well, as between the American scene and the Asian scene. Third, I was very aware that I needed to have somebody that, even if they did not know all of the regions well, had flexibility to go and learn about those regions. It would be easier for that person if he/she knew at least three out of five countries, etc. because the person would have had a certain level of exposure. Having said all of that, I really think that Apinan was a great choice.

I also feel that no matter what exhibitions you do, you are always choosing curators. When I ask somebody to do a 17th-century Indian painting show, I think as much about a curator and what they would bring to it, as I do about contemporary art. To some extent, they are personal choices and preferences. Sometimes, it has to do with what you are trying to do. For example, for a show of Indian temple sculpture I wanted a younger colleague who had dealt a great deal on the fragmentary nature of sculpture and its architectural relationship to look at medieval Indian sculpture the way it was not looked at before. We ought to give voice to the curator to make sure that people know what our parameters are and lay the process bare.

We have now begun to have text panels signed by a curator. We will have an exhibition team and their names are available, so that you go away from the facelessness of the institution to personalize it and to actually acknowledge that everything you do is essentially a personal opinion. It isn't some grandiose scheme. It is not that if it is an institution, there are no people involved.

G. Murray : I'm involved in a project for the next three years looking at twelve significant younger artists and sculptors. We are going through the discussion, and to the best of our abilities, trying to make the methodology transparent. The consultations are open so that people know what we're doing and the parameters of the logic and criteria. But at the end of the day, you're dealing with intuitions and notions, feelings, assessments of art, of what you think is going to be a good exhibition. And sometimes, that's a shot in the dark. Sometimes, you are taking a risk. It's this balance between making balanced judgments yet encouraging creative direction. But the problem you're talking about is

the lack of transparency, isn't it?

MC (A. Poshyananda): Opaque or transparent?

K. Kwok: I'm just looking around Southeast Asia. Another issue is the tension between the bureaucrats and the professionals. When you have a more advanced art infrastructure, a greater authority could be given to the professionals, who are actually looking across the different countries. The bureaucrats will still probably be the most powerful when it comes to matters about visual arts. When the professionals do become the choosers, what are their alignments? There are aesthetic alignments and there are extra aesthetic alignments. The aesthetic alignments would be: "What is the position?" "What is the worth of a post-graduate degree in art history?" "What is the value of their publications?" All these things will be in flux, going up and down. The extra aesthetic alignments will be social networks and cocktail parties. We are much too familiar with the complexity of everyday situations. Many of these professionals would go back to the discourse of art history, and you have a young curator who may be a composite of Apinan Poshyananda, John Clark, and maybe Jim Supangkat. So in a way, John, you are the chooser of choosers.

C. Turner: I've answered this question for Dr. Clark before, and I know that it's a great concern to him. I don't believe that we wear a mask. I think it's true that curators have to be chosen, as Dr. Desai has said. In our case for the Asia-Pacific Triennial, we've chosen curators in different ways. This is meant to be a show that is not afraid of ideas. I think that we have tried to choose curators who, we feel, are not afraid to express opinions and to bring forward ideas. It's not meant to be a safe exhibition. Strangely enough, it's been very non-controversial in Australia, but I think myself that is quite odd. There are many points of real controversy. But that is perhaps to do with the psychology of what is happening in Australia.

For the First Triennial, we chose many of our curators from your own and excellent conference, Dr. Clark, that you had organized in Australia, where you invited people, who you thought were experts, to Australia to speak about modern and post-modern art. It was through discussions with those people, through liking their ideas and developing a relationship that they became part of our first team to help shape the concept for the First Triennial. I would say that the concept for the First Triennial was shaped very much by a very small group of people, many of them from Asia. Most of them had stayed with us, not necessarily as curators, but in some capacity.

In some places like Indonesia, we knew people who had been involved in the international art world, but we tried to ask people in Indonesia who they thought would be the most suitable curators. Now this might appear to be the route to a bureaucratic situation, but it was very interesting how this worked out. There is no national art gallery in Indonesia and only a few art spaces. So we went to all the major art schools, and we talked to all the major art critics and scholars at various places, arranging special meetings. I can remember the one in Bandung with about 30 people

around a table, then speaking to them individually and in groups. They came up with three names of people who they thought were the best critics, writers, and curators in Indonesia. One of them was already the person who we probably would have gone to. In the end, we worked with two people because the circumstances did not allow for a team of three. But I thought it was extremely interesting that this process did not throw up someone very conservative at all. It threw up three people who I think were not afraid to challenge ideas. Some of the art from Indonesia has been some of the most radical art that we have shown, and it has been chosen with the full cooperation of the Indonesian curators.

I would have to agree with Dr. Clark that choices have to be made. Because we try to work with different people in each exhibition, we are at least achieving different perspectives. It would be a great deal easier if we stayed with one curator throughout, forever, but it is very important to constantly launch out into the unknown and the challenges of working with new people to bring in new ideas.

V.N. Desai: I would like to add that all of us in the art museum profession or art profession, whether we are academics, museum curators, or directors, are part of a network. We are constantly moving in certain networks. I think the danger is that often, in a relatively new field like contemporary Asian art, the network becomes too small too quickly and the same people get used again and again. I'm very aware of that already within a decade. Therefore, we have to continuously work harder to expand the network, including encouraging new people to come into the network.

"Traditions/Tensions" took five years in the making. In a conference in Italy, I was shocked to find out that almost all of those directors of the biennales and triennials had been to New York to pick up the artists for their next international biennales and triennials. They had not actually gone to Asia. They had not done the homework because this was easier. What was happening is that the same artists were getting picked up again and again. That's another kind of a danger. I think that we all need to think together about strategies by which we subvert that process. People have to do the homework. It has to be harder. A number of my colleagues in New York have said, "You know, it's difficult for me because I can't always go to Asia. So if you do it, it's easier for me to incorporate them into my show." I said, "No, just go to Germany or France less and try to figure out the way to go somewhere else in your next trip." Taking shortcuts, whether it's in the choice of curators or choice of artists or choice of scholarship, is what we have to constantly be vigilant against.

C. Turner: Yes, and there's one other point I would like to make. It's very difficult to persuade people in historical Asian art to join this process. We recently made an appointment of someone who is an expert in historical Asian art, who wants to become involved in the contemporary art. It's courses like yours at the universities which will turn the trend of scholarship around.

M. Ushiroshoji: Since I'm the only Japanese on the panel, I

would like to speak from the Japanese perspective.

Who chooses the choosers? A very simple question, but yet a profound one. This question reminds me of "The Potential of Asian Thought" symposium organized by the Japan Foundation in 1994, when Dr. Poshyananda criticized Japan because the Asian contemporary art shows in Japan were organized by Japanese curators, using Japanese money, to serve the Japanese audience. This was a very serious issue for me. At the same time, I feel that somebody has to do the choosing because using democratic means, in this case, would simply not work. The fact that Japanese were the only ones choosing was a big problem at the time. But I could also say, what is wrong with the Japanese curator choosing for the Japanese audience? The fundamental issue is, not that it is the Japanese curator's perspective, but that it is a one-way process, determined by, for example, financial concerns.

Now things have changed. Dr. Poshyananda has organized an exhibition in New York or has been involved in the Australian show as curator. I would be interested to see how curators, other than Japanese, look at Japanese art or how they would curate art of another country.

When I was working on the basic concept of our Asian Art Gallery, I remembered Dr. Poshyananda's criticism. I would like to incorporate exhibitions designed by other Asian curators or curators from other part of the world in our programs.

MC (A. Poshyananda): It seems that the bomb I left three years ago is still exploding. I will lay another bomb tomorrow. We will continue that tomorrow.

It's my turn to answer your question. I was the chosen. Somebody chose me to do the choosing. Now you said that if you know the curator, you will probably know the artist chosen, but I will disagree with you somewhat. I play different roles. In New York, I've been called the "shit-shield." You know, the shit-shield, where you throw the shit. I become the shield. As a curator, I take the shit. In Australia, I've been called the "shit-stirrer," the one who throws shit around. For example in Australia, I have been criticized because of the artists I chose—I would say a lot of people were pretty surprised—Destiny Deacon or Campfire Group, or Luke Roberts, because they were not established Australian names. Some Australian artists, whose names I can't recall, actually wrote that I was being flippant. I didn't choose *the* big names. I think they were thinking in terms of Mike Parr or Nixon. I went for less well-known names because I felt that they were appropriate for the show. I think those names were pretty unpredictable even by the Australian audience and curators.

Now, I'm doing another project for San Paulo Biennale. And I think the artists chosen will be very, very unpredictable.

Any more questions?

Question: I was able to see the "Asia/American" exhibition in Boston. I would like to ask you to comment on Japanese contemporary art. How do you, as curators of Asian contemporary shows, regard Japanese contemporary art in the context of Asian contemporary art? In Mr. Kwok's presentation, there was a passage which referred to the fact that museum curators are people

who studied Western art history, and there's probably something lacking because of that. This means that local curators should have different perspectives or would select different artists. Is there any gap that you experienced in a co-curation project at the Queensland Art Gallery, for example?

M. Ushiroshoji: I was involved in the third and fourth Asian Art Show in Fukuoka. The Asian artists in the fourth show were selected through our research in those countries based on the theme. I was in charge of selecting Asian artists and Kuroda Raiji, my colleague, was responsible for selecting artists for the Japanese section. I had decided on a theme but Mr. Kuroda and I worked together and discussed which artists should be included in our show. Mr. Kuroda had already experienced selecting artists for the Japanese section at the previous show.

For the fourth show, "Realism as an Attitude," we selected works that carried a political or social message. Kuroda had difficulties selecting Japanese artists to fall under that theme. We already had an impression during the third show, "Symbolic Visions in Contemporary Asian Life," that the Japanese contemporary art was somewhat out of context.

I have never worked with curators from Europe or America, but the works for the current "The Birth of Modern Art in Southeast Asia" exhibition were selected through a discussion with curators from each Southeast Asian country. There were times when works which I did not find interesting were strongly recommended. For example, in Malaysia, the "Salon Malaysia" competition is organized once every ten years. What the local juries choose are something that I would categorize as highly skilled crafts. There was obviously a gap between them and me.

MC (A. Poshyananda): I think that time has run out, and we have to draw this session to a close. I'd like to thank all my panelists who have done such a great job.

Asia Center (Y. Furuichi): This has been a long five hour presentation followed by panel discussion. It was very stimulating and I must thank Dr. Poshyananda for the excellent manner in which he has chaired the discussion throughout the afternoon. Dr. Desai chose him as the curator for the "Traditions/Tensions" exhibition but I chose him as the chairman for today's symposium.

The symposium will continue tomorrow.

Session II

Asia Center (Y. Furuichi): Good afternoon. We would like to start the second day of our symposium entitled "Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered." Yesterday we discussed the issues for the museums. Today we will start with Session II, "Issues for Critics and Artists." We will then move on to Session III where we will invite all participants to revisit the issues raised in the previous sessions.

Yesterday, many issues were raised by people working in the museums. Those issues were my own issues, so I found them very stimulating.

The way people perceive Asian art in Japan and the environment surrounding exhibitions of Asian art is a lot different from what it used to be five years ago. Yet it seems that there is not enough depth or breadth in the criticism. In thinking of the issues of Asian contemporary art, we need to see further development of criticism and research in this field.

I am sure the issue of making value judgment in collecting Asian contemporary art will emerge in today's sessions. I am sure such serious issues and other issues will be discussed.

I would like to now introduce today's chairman, Mr. Mizusawa Tsutomu although I do not think he actually needs an introduction. He is chief curator at The Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura in Japan and has been involved in organizing various exhibitions. This year he was the Japanese commissioner of the Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh, and he was also involved as guest curator for the Philippine section of the "Asian Modernism" exhibition, which was organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center in 1995. Mr. Mizusawa, please.

MC (Mizusawa Tsutomu): Good afternoon. We would now like to begin Session II of the symposium, "Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered," which is entitled, "Issues for Critics and Artists." I currently work as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art in Kamakura. I also had an opportunity to work as a curator for the Philippine section in "Asian Modernism" exhibition.

It goes without saying that though we do speak of Asia, we are actually speaking about a very vast and also diverse region which covers East Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia and that we should not make any simple generalization. I am highly critical of such a naïve and over-simplified view of Asia, which only reinstates the Western-centric cultural structure. Mr. Ushiroshoji mentioned the dualistic "West versus Japan" framework, and this seems to be amplified in the concept of a monolithic Asia. Yesterday, we had five panelists discuss their approach, carefully and patiently observing Asian contemporary art from multiple perspectives, and using their acquisition and exhibition programs to increase possibilities for nurturing and sharing knowledge of Asian art in the museum environment.

We heard reports from Dr. Desai on the "Traditions/Tensions :

Contemporary Art in Asia" exhibition at the Asia Society in which Dr. Poshyananda was the curator ; Dr. Turner who has had success in the past Asia-Pacific Triennials and is on her way to open the third one in 1999 ; Mr. Murray who has organized exhibitions such as "Liquid Crystal Futures," "Information and Reality" and "Reckoning with the Past" to introduce art from Asia at The Fruitmarket Gallery ; Mr. Kwok who was involved in the opening and is now the director of the Singapore Art Museum ; Mr. Ushiroshoji who has curated the Asian Art Show and is currently busy preparing to open the new Asia Art Gallery.

The discussion touched on behind-the-scene activities such as making value judgments on the works, or how curators are selected. All the panelists spoke frankly and with much honesty. They were very candid in sharing the information coming straight from the museums.

It is impossible to try to sum up the discussion in a brief statement, but I was most impressed by everyone's attitude of trying to find a way to apply a multicultural view, with a respect for the context of others, in reconsidering Asia and the potentials in a museum context. All the panelists stressed the importance of partnership, education and serious scholarship.

But we also can see that the system of the museum and the position of the curator are both results of Western modernity. Therefore, when art museums are operating most effectively, they are disseminating Western ideas or invading the community with these ideas. The museum must be constantly evaluated critically and objectively by critics and artists. And this is what we are going to discuss today.

If a museum were considered to be a cradle, and the curator were seen as the one rocking the cradle as if nurturing a baby, the Asia art we discuss today might be thought of as a rebellious teenager or a wise old man. Asia also has a tradition of ideas that dates back to the time before Greek and Rome. John Clark pointed to the question of selecting curators and its politics yesterday, and it is possible to see this as a strategy of intellectual enclosure brought about by a limited elite in handling Asian contemporary art. Dr. Poshyananda mentioned his setting a time bomb today. I wish I was a bomb disarming expert, but since the task is beyond my capacity, I would like to encourage you to join me in dealing with this threat. In Session II, the aim is to clarify the issues rather than simply identifying them.

I would now like to introduce the first speaker for this session, Dr. John Clark, who, as you know, is an associate professor at the University of Sydney where he teaches Japan Studies. He is also known as an expert, not just for modern art and modernity in Japan, but also in China, Thailand, and other countries. Based in Australia, he also has a pan-Pacific perspective and has been known as a commentator who is able to look at modernism in Asia from a very broad point of view. He has examined the most