

involvement in the public.”¹³

In the “Nokia Singapore Art 1999,” another innovative feature being introduced is the affiliate exhibition programs that generate initiatives by independent curators or art groups to organize exhibitions. It effectively will widen the range of curatorial approaches outside of the official events. PKW is one such group whose energy is being tapped for this purpose. Collaboration between establishment and artist groups is consciously seen here as being necessary to demonstrate the many curatorial and artistic approaches operating in contemporary art. I am by no means idealizing the structure being adopted “Nokia by Singapore Art 1999” as all of these devices (open category, awardee category, curated section and affiliated exhibitions) will also serve also to undermine the lucidity and clarity of delivery if curatorship is one such enterprise. What I had try to reclaim from a quotation by Sabapathy is to highlight the complexities in the engagements and collaborations between contemporary artists and groups, and national institutions and suggest some degree of optimism. However, as an institution that mediates between the state and contemporary practitioners and mindful about the nature of power-relations, the Museum acknowledges the unevenness of such relations. As such, the act of accommodating contemporary art is to be tempered by a pragmatic outlook through, if need be an emphasize of an imagined and shared objectives achieved by managing the meanings derived from the propositions of the participating artists as well as the aspirations of the state, thus encouraging works that are conceptually complex, multi-levelled and multi-coded. It is also important to place the “Nokia Singapore Art 1999” as part of an evolving process of mediation between state-control and artistic-freedom and space, thus being neither a corrective measure that asserts the removal of all boundaries, nor demonstrating the continuing imposition of state held values over cultural production.

The appropriation of the “alternative” in this instance is not a gesture of establishment’s arbitrary power, but rather hopefully, a process of enabling the emergence of a larger proposition of art as a constructive cultural currency responsive to the wider public discourse.

Notes:

1. Apinan Posyananda, opening remarks to “Session I: Issues for the Museums” in *Symposium: Asian Contemporary Art Reconsidered Report*, the Japan Foundation Asia Center 1998, p.137.
2. Kwok Kian Chow remarks: “The history of art in Singapore can be narrated through the development of art events and exhibitions since much of its stimulus can be attributed to the emergence of an infrastructure,” see Kwok Kian Chow, *Channels and Confluences: A History of Singapore Art*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, 1996, p.133. Responding to the remarks and exhibition, Lee Weng Choy writes: “What SAM’s (Singapore Art Museum’s) narrative demonstrates is that arts discourse in

Singapore has been centred around the market and the museum, and to a lesser extent the art schools, NAFA and LaSalle.” See Lee, Weng Choy, “Jump Start Art” in *ART AsiaPacific*, Vol. 3 No. 4, 1996.

3. Hill, Michael and Fee, Lian Kwen, *The Politics of National Building and Citizenship in Singapore*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp.236 - 241.
4. Quoted by Sabapathy, T.K., in *Introduction: The Space*, Artists Village, 1992.
5. Quoted by Lee, Weng Choy in “Alternative Spaces” in *ART AsiaPacific*, Issue 22, 1999.
6. Chua, Beng Huat, “Culture, Multiculturalism, and National Identity in Singapore”, in Chen, Kuan-Hsing (Ed.), *Trajectories: Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, p.186.
7. For a discussion on the performance and ensuing events, see Langenbach, Ray, “Looking Back at Brother Cane: Performance Art and State Performance” in *Space, Spaces and Spacing: The Substation Conference 1995*, The Substation, Singapore, 1996, pp.132-147.
8. The term “ARX5 organizers” was defined as the participating curators from Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong along with Chair of ARX, Margaret Moore. See the joint declaration in answer to correspondence and Hong Kong questionnaire issued by ARX dated November 17, 1998. The Singapore Art Museum relation to the ARX5 was as a host venue that holds the responsibility in advising the organizers on local matters including providing views on what is deemed to be “defamatory, offensive or contravene” under the laws of Singapore. “The participating artists were required to be sensitive to the local cultural context as a condition for participation in the project.”
9. For some critical commentary on the event, see Lenzi, Iola, “Process and Politics, ARX5: The Fifth Artists’ Regional Exchange,” and Lee, Weng Choy, “Misunderstanding Art” in *ART AsiaPacific*. While the ARX letter of November 17, 1998 had disclosed the nature and results of the negotiations involving the ARX5 organizers (inclusive of Hong Kong curator Oscar Ho), the Museum and artist concerned, in quoting Ho, Lee may not have the knowledge of this letter.
10. Further to footnote 8, the joint statement of the organizers recorded in the dated November 17, 1999 letter reads “Organisers and Zunzi Wong mediated and agreed on the non-incorporation of identity of personalities in the artwork as this was deemed to be unacceptable in the Singaporean cultural context. Ongoing mediation on the specific components of the work to be incorporated began one day before the completion of the work for the same day opening of the exhibition. The organizers’ final suggestion conveyed to the artist if something could be done on the words ‘elder statesman’ was refused by the artist. A decision was taken not to include Zunzi Wong’s work for the ARX exhibition.”
11. Chua, op. cit., pp.200-201.
12. The challenge for artists working under such circumstances it seems is in devising strategies and developing codes to be applied into their works, allowing for multiple meanings as well as differentiating and managing the readings made by differing audiences.
13. Sabapathy, T.K., “Trimurti: Contemporary Art in Singapore” in *ART and AsiaPacific*, Sample Issue, 1993.

Who "Introduces" What to Whom and Why?

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Starting around the end of the 1980s, exhibitions introducing contemporary art from the countries and regions of Asia have been held with increasing frequency in Japan. There were a few earlier examples of these presentations of the work of artists who either live in Asia or have Asian origins, especially those organized by the Fukuoka Art Museum, but it was not until the early 1990s that the trend really began developing momentum. I would like to reflect on this phenomenon from the Japanese point of view, examining some of the factors that led to it and some of the problems that it entails.

Since Fukuoka is geographically close to Korea and China, it was perhaps natural for the Fukuoka Art Museum to be one of the first Japanese institutions to seriously undertake cultural exchange programs involving other Asian nations. It deserves praise for its pioneering role in "introducing" Asian art in this country. The Japan Foundation ASEAN Culture Center (renamed the Asia Center) also made us more familiar with the contemporary art scene in Southeast Asia through its research and exhibitions commencing in the late 1980s.

The exhibitions sponsored by the Fukuoka Art Museum and the Japan Foundation were mounted on a large scale and presented a broader range of art than was possible in shows of individual artists organized by private galleries, so they produced a dramatic change in the situation of contemporary art in Japan. Eventually the ASEAN Culture Center changed its name to the Asia Center, and the range of its programs was expanded to cover a much wider region. Also, many public Japanese museums began to plan Asia-related shows, partially stimulated by the growing interest in non-Western culture in Europe, North America, and Australia. At present, this flurry of "introducing" activity seems to have leveled off to some extent, and I believe it is a good time to look more carefully at some of the problems that have emerged.

There is no denying the tremendous increase in the number of Asia-related exhibitions during the decade of the 1990s, and there has been a corresponding growth of coverage of the contemporary Asian scene in the art media. Cultural exchanges between Japan and other Asian countries have definitely expanded. However, this extra attention paid to Asian art in exhibitions and art magazines does not seem to have attracted a great deal of interest among the general public and it has not made a significant impact on the domestic art world. The art of other Asian countries has yet to affect the Japanese on a deep level.

One reason for this is that the introduction of Asian art in Japan has not been a response to spontaneous demand from within the Japanese art world. Government organizations and public art museums have taken the lead in presenting Asian art to the public, a fact that needs to be considered carefully. Neither Japanese artists nor the general public have been strongly motivated to understand the tendencies or structures of Asian art as a way of breaking out of their own present situation or achieving greater progress in Japanese art.

I do not mean to imply that it is inappropriate for government organizations or museums to take the lead in educating the public in certain areas. In fact, without their active involvement, the eye-opening changes that we are witnessing today would never have taken place. However, it is necessary for government organizations and public museums to go beyond simply gathering knowledge and mounting introductory exhibitions of the art of Asian countries. They need to find connections between inner motivations of Asian art and the inner motivation of art practitioners in Japan. When Europeans organize exhibitions of non-European material, they often show a concern with using the foreign culture to effect change or renewal in the spiritual condition of their own culture.

With this in mind, I would like to go back and reexamine the fundamental question of who introduces what to whom and why. First, the "What?" Instead of introducing the art of Asia in a general and superficial way, it is necessary to focus on the fundamental qualities of specific works. I am convinced that a greater awareness of these essential qualities can lead to an improvement of the spiritual condition of Japan in the future, a more global point of view and a greater understanding of the other within.

The next question is "Who?" and "To Whom?" The art of Asia should be presented by people who are actively engaged in improving the spiritual condition of Japan and they should do it for themselves. To go further into the "What?" they should focus on the spiritual similarities and differences between Japan and other Asian countries and how they can be used to gain a perspective on the spiritual condition of Japan. The "Why?" for this enterprise is to eliminate the self-righteousness and complacency of Japan and achieve a global perspective in our own local context by coming to understand the spiritual qualities of Asia as the "other" within us. Government organizations and public museums must strive to represent the people who are "actively engaged" in cultural improvement when they present exhibitions of Asian art.

It is not appropriate, however, to make excessive demands on government institutions and museums. Fundamentally, the demand for greater knowledge of Asian art must come spontaneously from Japanese artists and critics. The "What" must be examined more critically and be more carefully defined. In fact, these concerns are relevant to any large-scale international exhibition in Japan, not just those connected with

Asia. Since ancient times, the mental life of the Japanese has been based on the double-sided structure between an international viewpoint (facing outside) and a domestic viewpoint (facing inward). The time has come for this to change.

The change is still coming. At present, the question of "Who is exhibiting to whom?" has not been clearly answered, and the situation is overly influenced by political and commercial interests. The approach that has been established is not oriented toward improving the spiritual condition of Japan. From a broad viewpoint that takes in other countries as well as our own, it should be clear that introductions of Asian art undertaken for the spiritual betterment of Japan will also lead to greater respect for the culture of the other countries. Unfortunately, because this point has not been adequately understood, Japanese attempts at introducing the culture of other countries have left us open to the criticism of a "Japanese cultural invasion." And it has been thought this "invasion" is being used to achieve other questionable purposes. This problem needs immediate attention. In one sense or another, however, it is something that applies to the internal affairs of all countries.

I would like to give some examples of things that have been done in recent exhibitions that could help solve the problems involved in "introducing" Asian art in Japan. The first example is the inclusion of Japanese artists in the "First Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale 1999," the inaugural exhibition of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum held between March and June this year. Although this was a perfectly natural decision, it represented an effort to look at the conditions of art inside and outside Japan in the same context, and the result left a strong impression on museum visitors. Rather than confining the presentation to the usual category of "Asian countries and regions," the Fukuoka show focused on a comparison of individual artists.

I do not know whether the organizer deliberately attempted to set up this comparison and contrast, but I felt that it might be a key to improving future "introductions" of Asian art. I wrote a review of this exhibition for the monthly art magazine, *Bijutsu Techo*, entitled "Beyond the Inner Other — The First Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale 1999" in which I contrasted the *Museum of Soy Sauce Art* (1999) by Ozawa Tsuyoshi of Japan and *The Four Gracious Plants* by Ium of Korea (1998). Comparison of these two installations reveals that both artists possess a "self built up over a cross-section of historical time" that makes sharing possible in spite of differences in historical background. I would like to quote at length from this article.

"Tsuyoshi Ozawa's installation, *Museum of Soy Sauce Art* (1999), contained many copies executed in soy sauce of well-known paintings from the successive periods of Japanese art from the early modern era to the present,

surrounded by a large number of ordinary objects from the same time. The interior of the installation space is filled with the smell of soy sauce, and the artist has designed it so that the audience experiences it with all five senses. By using the smell of soy sauce he makes us aware of a self made up of conflicting historical memories that might be described as events involving the other within us.

Ium's, *The Four Gracious Plants* (1998) was an installation of large photographs showing the artist in black rubber clothing personifying four plants, the plum, orchid, chrysanthemum, and bamboo, which are known as the "four gentlemen," along with three-dimensional human figures in white rubber clothing that also represent the four plants. The gaze of the visitor noticing contemporary, popular fashions influenced by Western culture is overlapped in a strange way with the gaze of the Korean folk based on memories of oriental tradition, creating an internal dialog the contemporary and traditional gaze.

The self of the future is formed through the conflict and mixture of old and new gazes on which contemporary society is based. She calls this a "new orientalism." Of course, this is neither ordinary orientalism, retro fashion, or kitsch. Previously, Ium has descended into contemporary popular culture and ancient shamanism, so she speaks with extra emphasis when she talks about "high art." This inner dialog between the two unconscious gazes of the Korean people seems, at first glance, to be an acceptance of the status quo, but actually it may be the next generation's way of searching for itself. By setting up this conflict between the opposing gazes of people who may see each other as "others," she encounters infinite time and space. This can be expected to lead to an esthetic approach to constructing the self."¹

I believe that various approaches, including the method of comparison and contrast, should be used in introducing Asian art in this country in order to create a context where connections can be made between art and artists from inside and outside Japan. I am looking forward to hearing more about the current situation in other countries of Asia besides Japan from the participants representing those countries with respect to this problem of bringing together internal and external points of view.

(Translated by Stanley N. Anderson)

Notes:

1. "Uchinaru Tasha no Kanatani [Beyond the Inner Other] — The 1st Fukuoka Art Triennale 1999," *Bijutsu Techo*, June issue, 1999, pp.119-122.

MC (Nanjo Fumio) : During Session I, we heard presentations on the domestic art scene and conditions of countries that have been introduced through exhibitions in the past decade. "Who introduces them?" is the underlying issue, as we started to discuss yesterday. In other words, who are the curators or the institutions that present them? What are their perspectives? Some points have been raised by speakers from countries being presented on the various intentions and motivations of these museums and institutions.

For Session II, we had four presentations on the theme, "Examining Asian Contemporary Art of the 1990s, Part 2: Perspectives of the Presenters."

I think our first speaker, David Elliott, used the word, "Black Hole," to explain the situation in which Asia is still stereotyped by the contemporary art curators and institutions. The exhibition, "Cities on the Move," that was mentioned in the last half of his presentation has attracted much attention since last year. The concept of this exhibition, which is touring around the world at the moment, is to portray Asian cities and their culture through works of various artists and architects. Mr. Elliott's opinion seems to be that such an exhibition reinforces the stereotype. I would like to come back to this point later on and ask the opinions of others who have seen the show.

We had Ms. Devenport as our second speaker. As she indeed represents a multicultural society, I felt that her perspective included that of diverse "others." I was also impressed by the process used to organize the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT). There are many curators and researchers involved in collecting the information through different sources, visiting and staying in the country, and building a network of people. I think that the APT represents one way in which institutions can promote and organize Asian contemporary art exhibitions. The institution has a well-defined aim of making APT into a venue where intimate communication in multiple languages with multiple views is possible. APT's stance is different from that of "Cities on the Move," which is based on a very strong concept created by the curator, Hans-Ulrich Obrist.

Our third speaker was Mr. Mashadi from Singapore Art Museum. I believe that every country and society is restricted in some ways, and there is not one that allows total freedom of expression, but Singapore seems to present a case in which expression can be indeed a sensitive matter. Working in a contemporary art museum may be particularly difficult in Singapore. The presentation described the tension experienced by a curator who has to directly face the problem of freedom of expression. I was impressed by the way Mr. Mashadi was trying to look at the positive side of the situation.

Mr. Nakamura said, in presenting his paper, that he does

not have the answers, but he seems to have asked himself, and answered, the question raised by Asian countries other than Japan of whether or not Japanese and Australian organizers have specific aims in putting together exhibitions.

Since we are finished with the presentations, I would like to ask our commentators to give their comments or ask questions. May we have Mr. Shioda first, please?

Shioda Junichi: May I first begin by saying how much I always enjoy Mr. Elliott's presentations in which he uses metaphors very effectively. I understand that the term, "Black Hole" was used as a metaphor to describe the situation of stereotyping Asia.

My museum held an exhibition this spring by Araki Nobuyoshi's exhibition entitled, "Araki Nobuyoshi: Sentimental Photography, Sentimental Life." Perhaps the space we created in our museum with Araki's photographs would be regarded as a "Black Hole" in Europe or the United States.

Mr. Elliott has clearly pointed out the danger of curation falling into the trap of stereotyping, and this is probably not limited to Asian contemporary art shows. I think there were two important issues raised in his presentation.

The first is the issue of the region. In looking at the exhibitions that present art from the Asian region, we notice that there are countries such as Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia that usually do not take part in these events; however, I believe these countries were covered in the Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale. I cannot help noticing the fact that the art from these countries represents a slightly different trend from others in the same region.

There is also the problem of the Islamic regions. This area was not represented in either of the exhibitions in Fukuoka or Brisbane. This has to do with how far we extend the geographical boundary, the categorization, of Asia. The art from Islamic countries other than Indonesia and Pakistan is unfamiliar to us in Japan.

The second issue is the curatorial approach. In one approach, works can be selected according to their qualities as works of art or by giving consideration to their cultural background and context. I believe each approach has its inherent problems, as given in the example of the "Cities on the Move" exhibition, which took the latter approach and presented the situation of the Asian cities. Mr. Elliott pointed out the risk in this approach of creating something like a new anthropological museum. Historically, in Europe, Asian and African art have been collected and exhibited in anthropological museums, rather than fine arts museum.

My question to Mr. Elliott is, if you were to organize an exhibition in your museum, which of the two approaches would you choose, giving priority to the work of art or to its cultural background? Also, what is the best way to avoid stereotyping?

David Elliott: I think that from the Western perspective, which is the only perspective I can talk from, whatever is shown has to be shown exactly the same way as anything else in the space. You should not have to make any allowances for it. That does not mean to say that it gives up all its meanings immediately as the context is different. That is certainly also the case with a painting by Barnett Newman, for instance. I mean there are many references in seemingly simple abstract paintings by Newman which one needs to become aware of. But still, regardless of those references, you can experience the work in the same open way with all the richness of your own experience.

Then there is the second stage of mediating this work and opening up its meanings. This would be exactly the same problem in mediating contemporary Swedish art to a similar audience. Frankly, it is just as unfamiliar to them as anything, say, from Japan. If they were not coming from an environment in which contemporary art was an important part of culture, they would probably need some additional information. So I think really the answer is treat art from other cultures as you would do anything else. Because it is from another part of the world, you should not treat it in any other way. Certainly do not exoticize it. You also should not treat it as some kind of poor cousin who needs helping because if it is any good, it should not need any help. It should be there and have a right to be there. It was made to be there by artists. And that has to do with quality. Quality is a cultural construct, I agree. There are different aesthetic systems which operate in different parts of the world. But if we are talking about modern art, there may be different constructs. But here is a single polyvalent discourse. And that discourse is very wide. That is why I said that someone has to take an active decision about what is shown. Work from outside really needs to at least fit in within the discourse in the country where it is shown. It is no good showing it if not. Anything else is anthropology, purely examples of the taste of other cultures. Does that answer your question?

MC (F. Nanjo): This issue needs to be discussed in greater depth. The question is: "How can we break away from stereotyping?" There are different approaches taken by different curators and institutions, each with different advantages and disadvantages.

But before we get into that discussion, I would like to invite the next comment from Mr. Shimizu on Ms. Devenport's presentation.

Shimizu Toshio: Ms. Devenport's presentation was on APT. It is interesting to compare the trend of international exhibitions in the 1990s, in which international exhibitions of contemporary art flourished, to that of the nineteenth century when many industrial expositions were held. These exhibitions have been held in places where cultural currents flow together

such as Brisbane, Kwangju, Istanbul, and Johannesburg.

In the case of Brisbane, I understood that the Triennial was prompted by the increased number of ethnic minorities and people rooted in different cultures in Australian society. Australia was dominantly a white society for a long time. In taking a hint from Mr. Elliott's phrase, "Black Hole," to describe Asia, I would describe Australia as a "White Hole." It was almost non-existent from the viewpoint of Asia. Now the situation has changed with the presence of APT, in which many artists from Asia participate and exchange ideas. Local Australians are perhaps the biggest beneficiaries of this. APT attracts as many as 400,000 people so it has a large impact.

I organize exhibitions introducing artists from Asia and Africa to the Japanese audience, but I often find the communication to be one-sided. In other words, Japan is on the receiving end in the various cultural exchanges. I think that Australia today is in a very similar position. Australia invites artists to bring traditions, food culture, etc. that are not available locally and the Australians benefit from this exchange.

I find this one-way communication to be a problem, and feel the need to change the direction somehow. Queensland Art Gallery's effort to create a network was mentioned, but I wonder if there are any efforts in bringing things from Australia to other countries, or sending things out from Australia?

Rhana Devenport: Thank you. Yes, very interesting comments. I really do like the "White Hole" analogy. I think it says much about Australia and yes — I imagine we have been perceived as a "White Hole" by much of the rest of the world as well. For some we are certainly still in that "White Hole," I suspect.

Yes — there are two points I wanted to discuss and they are both important within the two-way exchange — any exchange, any discourse that involves two entities engaging.

Firstly, I did not have time in my presentation to speak more about the involvement of painter N. S. Harsha from Mysore, India within the APT3. At the moment he is winging his way around "the outback" of Queensland in a tiny four-seater plane. He is leading a series of painting workshops in regional Queensland as part of the Visitors Outreach Program for APT3. After his time in Brisbane during the opening of the Triennial, and a residency at a local junior school, he will undertake a teaching residency with a local university concentrating on Internet art (as Harsha is also a web designer). So I think this is one way that we can enhance and strengthen the potential for exchange.

To explain the Visitors Outreach Program further, the Gallery plays a facilitation role to connect about fifty-five organizations and universities across Australia with APT artists, curators and conference speakers through residencies, workshops and projects. I started my written paper with Ben Vautier's declaration, "Am I or is Australia too far away?" —

we realized that coming to Australia is a long journey and so, what we have tried to do is to engage those artists who travel to Brisbane for APT, in substantial programs throughout Australia including Perth, Darwin, Cairns etc. This is a long term program offered to Australian arts communities—the Gallery receives nothing financially or directly from the Program, but rather we feel that the Outreach Program does initiate and support sincere long term international relationships. The alternative situation is quite a dangerous one with artists being “brought in,” “looked at,” and “shipped out.” I think we really do try to avoid that problem as we are aware of that inherent danger.

My second point is on the idea of exhibitions curated in Australia and presented in Asia. Actually the first contemporary Asian exchange project undertaken by the Gallery was with the Museum of Modern Art, Saitama over a decade ago. This project involved two exhibitions, both co-curated by Queensland Art Gallery and Saitama curators—with one exhibition in Brisbane of Japanese work, and one in Saitama of Australian work.

An Australian-initiated project that I found very interesting was the “Fire and Life” project coordinated by Asialink. This involved ten artists (five of whom were Indian, five of whom were Australian), there were ten locations (five in India, five in Australia), and involved five “arranged” marriages between the Indian and Australian artists. I showed an image before of a collaboration between N. S. Harsha and Joan Grounds (the youngest and the oldest artists within the project) who worked together very successfully. Now, marriages, as is often the case, do not always end up with children, and do not always end up in joy, and some of those relationships were not entirely successful. However, there were huge shifts and changes in the perceptions and understandings of participating artists. “Fire and Life” also involved five-week residencies for each artist in the city of the “matched” artist. This was an enormous logistical project, but one I think that has prompted some interesting shifts in processes of art making and also of artist and audience interactions.

So what the Gallery tries to do with the Triennial, I suppose, is work with those people who have been involved in these kinds of exchanges and who are very supportive of significant “process” engagement. Of course the Triennial is involved with about twenty countries and involves about fifty-five Australian and international curators, so the scale of the APT project means that we cannot take the project out of Brisbane or off-shore. We tour the artists not the show. It is a project located in Brisbane, but we really do hope that through those networks of curators—international curators traveling to Australia and the Australian curators (including many curators from outside the Queensland Art Gallery) traveling to the Asia-Pacific region—and through these processes many other ideas are spawned and many other exhibitions and projects may be given birth. I hope this answers your

questions in some way. Thank you.

MC (F. Nanjo): Can I now invite Mr. Ushiroshoji to comment on Mr. Mashadi’s presentation?

Ushiroshoji Masahiro: I understand that Singapore in the 1990s, after spending thirty years in building the nation, had laid the foundation for arts activities with a solid underlying economic strength. Mr. Mashadi described the Singapore Art Museum as a national museum that was built as an apparatus to tell the stories of the nation-state. He also explained how contemporary artists are now interested in deconstructing or destroying those stories. Examples of the conflict between the museum and the artists in a working relationship were presented. I am personally interested in the incident in which one of the works was withdrawn from the exhibition, and am tempted to ask more questions about this incident, but since the subject would divert us from the main focus of our discussion, I will leave it for the moment.

I sensed that you were trying to find a model for solving such problems in Singapore through organizing the “Nokia Singapore Art 1999” festival. Although you mentioned that you are trying not to be idealistic, I think you are trying to find some kind of a solution in this festival. Since I could not digest all the information and do not yet to fully understand how this festival could potentially become a suitable model, can you elaborate on it, not in a general way but from a museum curator’s point of view? What solutions are you looking for in this festival?

Ahmad Mashadi: Thank you, Mr. Ushiroshoji. I think what I have tried to do is to actually look into the specificities of art curatorship, the relationship between the various elements that make the art event possible, which is, here in this case, the museum’s involvement with contemporary art with, of course, the state being the host of the museum. In my written paper I have actually quoted from Dr. Poshyananda, who is interested in the process of cultural arbitration and how it relates to the systems of value. What I have tried here is to present the Singaporean perspective as to how arbitration can take place and how arbitration can present problems. So in that sense, what I am trying to say is that there are perhaps some problems that museums face when it comes to dealing with art that can be sensitive or that can be problematic in relation to a certain set of values held by society at large.

I have given two examples, and those two examples actually deal with two specific areas which are sensitive in Singapore. The first is the notion of censorship. The second is the notion of political commentary in art. I do not wish to pass judgement on how these two issues have been handled, but what I am trying to say is that they are a reality within the context and history of our museum. A museum starts to actually develop museological practices, mindful of the history,

mindful of the context, and, of course, observant of a particular vision that a museum has. So, in that sense, where "Nokia" is concerned, what it can do for us is to provide some idea as to how we can continue to manage contemporary art and present it in a way which is both supportive of the interest of the host, that is the state, as well as the interest of the contemporary artists' community. So in that sense, there is little idealism here, but in fact, a formal pragmatism where we have to continuously observe how society responds to certain things and in response make sure that we can continue to promote our interest in performance art. We want to make sure that when we are five years old, ten years old, we are able to actually secure more space, both physical space and conceptual space for contemporary artists to operate in. Of course, at the same time, we want to nurture and maintain good relations and achieve an understanding with the state as to what the museum's objectives are and how the museum will actually get its objectives.

What is interesting for us about "Nokia" is that it is very much in our interest to change a particular model of exhibition which is quickly becoming non-operative, a series which is losing the interest of the public. The public is no longer interested in the Singapore art series. The last exhibit held in 1997 only obtained 8,000 visitors. That is very low. What we are intending to do is to improve the event, revitalize it by absorbing the event into the museum's programming. Then by doing some very heavy curatorial work on it, we can nurture key artists who may come up through these exhibitions. Another key feature which I want to mention is the fact that we are trying to bring in independent curators to hold special exhibitions aside from the official ones. And these exhibitions will help to provide a dialogue with or contextualize the main exhibition. Therefore, we also hope to develop diversity in curatorial approaches in Singapore. In this way we are also able to actually bring critical thinking into contemporary art. Why do we say this? I think it is largely because we must be seen as very, very active in terms of performing a function to, firstly, help the artists gain more space for contemporary art to educate the public contemporary art, and also to educate the state about the value and possibilities of contemporary art.

MC (F. Nanjo): Last of all, I would like to invite Mr. Tani to speak.

Tani Arata: I believe the ASEAN Culture Center, the forerunner of the Asia Center, was founded in 1990. I think it was in December of 1989 that I met with Mr. Ushiroshoji, the director of Fukuoka Art Museum at the time, and the staff of the ASEAN Culture Center in Shibuya.

So this year marks the tenth anniversary of this organization, and as Mr. Nakamura has commented, quite some time has passed since then. At that time we were not able to discuss things, whether exhibitions or symposiums, in a

setting that attracts so much attention and requires such seriousness. In this light, the history of introducing Asian art in Japan is now at a "turning point," using Mr. Nakamura's words.

Mr. Nakamura was quite specific in discussing "who" and "to whom." His presentation aimed to propose a certain way of dealing with our issue.

His fundamental concept, key phrase is the "inner other." I wish to ask Mr. Nakamura to elaborate on the "inner other." One way of looking at the "inner other" is Mr. Nakamura's answer to the "why." The answer being, "to eliminate the self-righteousness and complacency of Japan and achieve a global perspective in our own local context by coming to understand the spiritual qualities of Asia as the 'other' within us."

In discussing the "inner other," let me draw an example from Ozawa Tsuyoshi's work that was presented at the First Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale. Like that of Ium of Korea, it dealt with ambiguity. If the concept of Ozawa's work is thought of as Ozawa's relationship with Japan, then Ozawa was looking at Japan as the "other," the absolute "other." It exists in a category without the "inner." I felt there was a basic switch in the relationship between self and other, between Ozawa and Japan. His work is like a spiritual thread that runs throughout the historical process right up to the contemporary age. Can I have Mr. Nakamura comment on this?

MC (F. Nanjo): Before Mr. Nakamura answers, I would like to say something about the "inner other." The English text speaks of "...the spiritual qualities of Asia as the 'other' within us." This may sound a little different from the "inner other" to the English-speaking panelists and audience.

Mr. Nakamura, please continue.

Nakamura Hideki: The term "inner other" might be abstract and difficult to understand. If we take the example of Japan, we Japanese are not as aware of the gaze of "others," or those who are not our fellow countrymen, because Japan is an island surrounded by water.

What I mean by "inner" or "within" is not about inside and outside Japan, but rather about personal experiences in becoming conscious of how others look at us. A person who has the experience of living abroad might sense this gaze of others. Without such an experience, it may be difficult to understand this feeling. Given such conditions, I wondered how audiences could become conscious of the gaze of others through an experience such as an exhibition.

As for Ozawa Tsuyoshi, he sees within himself another part of himself of which he cannot fully comprehend. His work also seems to imply that there is a time lag occurring between the two selves, giving him the opportunity to look at his own existence from a distance.

MC (F. Nanjo): I hope that this answers your question, Mr. Tani.

A. Tani: Yes. There is an issue, raised today by Mr. Elliott, of the viewpoint of organizers of exhibitions of Asian art. There is also the problem of how Asia is defined. And there are related problems of what kind of curatorship is best and what points must be considered in thinking about Asian art, transcending the categories of nationalistic art or art based on national identity. These issues need further attention in tomorrow's discussion.

MC (F. Nanjo): I think one of the topics raised concerning the presenters was how art should be presented. Getting back to the first discussion with Mr. Elliott, a major point was raised about seeing Asia in terms of cliché or stereotype, whether considering old things or new things, and what we can be done to overcome this.

This specifically refers to methods of making an exhibition. But before getting into the practical side of the issue, I think that we must first think about how we can understand different cultures, not just those of Asia. Can we really understand the meaning of a work that was created in an unfamiliar cultural context?

Although Mr. Elliott pointed out that regionalism does not necessarily conflict with internationalism or universalism, in practice we often experience a conflict. For example, if you do not know the cultural background of a country, it can be difficult to understand the meaning of the work that comes from that country. So then, should somebody explain the context? Furthermore, how can a curator grasp the real meaning of art by visiting the country for just a week or two? Mr. Elliott has already shared with us his views on this point, so I wonder if there is anybody else that might comment? Mr. Tatehata, please.

Tatehata Akira: I think the point that you just raised is very important.

For one thing, in the context of understanding Asian art, Mr. Supangkat, Mr. Elliott, and Mr. Hoskote, used the word, "discourse."

Mr. Elliott's opinion was quite clear. To avoid falling into the "Black Hole" when organizing regional exhibitions, one must take one of two approaches. One is to bring an unknown work from an unfamiliar region and fit it into the contemporary art discourse, given that contemporary art is an international discourse that is commonly shared in the world. Second is an approach in which one explores a common history, experience, spiritual quality, or attitude in the works. Mr. Supangkat's idea of "discoursing," the process of creating a discourse around Asian art where one does not yet exist, is close to Mr. Elliott's second approach. I believe they are saying the same thing.

By the way, I plan to propose a "third discourse" in my presentation tomorrow. But for now, I would like to ask Mr. Elliott if the two approaches, one that is based on the contemporary art discourse, and the other, based on the idea which Mr. Supangkat calls the process of "discoursing," should be mutually exclusive? Should we not proceed by looking at both approaches? Or should the approach be selected depending on the subject? I would like to hear your opinion on how we should distinguish the two in our curatorial practice.

D. Elliott: Yes. As I see it and as I understood what Mr. Supangkat was saying, and I have heard him in other situations developing similar ideas, there are absolutely no conflicts between the two ideas. The discourse to which I was referring to was, whatever word you want to use, the international or globalized discourse. Many different people discourse about what constitutes contemporary art. Of course, it is a discourse which is always changing because as each generation or group of different artists grow up wherever they may be they contribute to this. Art changes. It is a bit like an amoebae. It is always moving on different fronts at different times. That is the big or meta-discourse.

Whatever is dropped into this, for example, an exhibition (it need not be of the art of Asia), may sink or swim and have an impact on the overall shape. If it is well done it changes the overall shape of this small animal.

But there is also a process of discoursing which Mr. Supangkat may well like to elaborate on, which is really a process which I understood as being something much more internal to the situation within Asia, within a region, within a locality, a way of developing ideas and clarifying what the issues are for contemporary art and for contemporary artists. At a time of considerable social change — I mean social, political, economic, ideological change — this is more like a computer crunching numbers, trying to work it all out and get some kind of sense, consensus and agreement about what direction art is going and where the points of pressure are. Again it is not a linear thing, and there is no single answer. There is no answer rising to the surface. It is actually most like a series of realizations. "This is what we have been doing." "This is what we are doing now." "We think it is right." "We like doing it." "It is necessary to do this as artists." I mean that is what I understand by the process of discoursing. Whatever you do has to be necessary, which sounds like Kandinsky, doesn't it, who wrote about "inner necessity"? I believe that there may be an inner necessity, which is not purely inner or spiritual, but something much broader than that intervenes in some way within the social fabric. Such ideas focus artists' attention. They may change from time to time, from year to year, sometimes.

MC (F. Nanjo): Dr. Poshyananda, you often make a clear-cut