

lead the panel to discuss and share the vision with Professor Wang's proposition for "an attempt to break through 21st-century 'new empire' order and its logic." In the third presentation, Mr. Goenawan Mohamad, discussed Asia as "a concept by which we measure our pain," and introduced accounts of contradictions in Indonesian history accompanied by a delicate historical analysis. This perception of "pain" resonated with Professor Sakai's keynote speech, and led to bear fruit during the panel discussion which in part examined the representation of "Asia in pain."

To feel the "pain" in "Asia" that is two-sided, "liberated" and "dominated," gave hint to illuminating the many "Asias" that were excluded from the schematism of "co-figuration." There were several cases in Sessions II and III that also responded to this idea of "the many Asias in pain." Although this pain may not be relieved, if we become aware of it, we could at least be sensitive to the risk of victimizing Asia again.

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### Koizumi Shinya

I participated in Session I to discuss the concept of "Asia" and the historical process of its making. My prediction — that "Asia is diverse," therefore, the word "Asia" will not be able to explain anything — was half right and half wrong.

Professor Wang Hui asserted that there is no real discussion on the topic of Asia in China. He examined the case on Asia in a historical context, and led to discussing the "tributary system," which he raised as an example to describe an Asia that could be explained from a historical perspective of Western modernity. Although the tributary system was more than a simple center-margin relationship, from the view of the modern European international treaty system, even Hegel saw Asia as a state of standing still. It was an eye-opening experience for me to realize that such ideas originated in theories of Japanese historians in the 1940s.

Mr. Mohamad's Indonesian perspective on "Asia" and its pain were equally inspiring. His remark on how the "Asian image" that emerged from the Russo-Japanese War was not normative but performative is remarkably comparable to that of Okakura Kakuzo, a

Japanese contemporary. Also, Theosophical Society's involvement in disseminating an expressive Asia, based on the Tagore's recognition of "uniqueness of Asian cultural inheritance," was new knowledge for me. I was particularly reminded by how the Society's core identity was "Asia that was discovered by the West." I would imagine that, together with Italian educationalist Montesorri's deep involvement with India in her later years, the society in Boston with which Okakura had close association was familiar with, if not influenced by, the Society's movement. The fact that the Theosophical Society in Indonesia welcomed Japanese invasion of Indonesia strikes a chord with how Okakura's ideas were received during that particular period, as well as what the relationship between the Nazis and the German Theosophical Society was like at the time.

At the plenary session, Mr. Mizusawa pointed out, through examples of Hitler's "Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art)" and "Great German Art" exhibitions that modernism itself entails an aspect of totalitarianism. Mr. Mohamad responded by asserting that in "the art in the realm of ideas, there is always a perpetual production of elite" and that "identity is a form which is basically a group phenomena," and to which we must at times respect differences. While I was listening to this comment, I thought of Okakura who pitied himself in a love letter he wrote in his later years.

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### Wang Hui

Although China is an Asian country, discussions about Asia have not been so common in China. When I was writing my paper, the question that haunted my mind was why China seems to have kept its silence on this issue. In my speech at the conference, I presented several possible answers to these questions as follows. First, Asia, as a concept, or a recognized resource, was a product of the 19th century. During that period, the Chinese scholars were mostly under the influence of China-West dualism. Second, the evolution of China in modern times, especially in the 20th century, was brought about by social revolution. Notions such as class, nation, and internationalism as well were given much more importance than that of Asia during the development of modern identity. In Mao Zedong times, the

significance of Asia, Africa, and Latin America lay in their position within the imperialist period, rather than on each of their own history and culture. Third, the development of Asia as a concept had been curbed when the Japanese colonialism expanded into other areas of Asia (including China) in the name of "Greater Far East Co-prosperity Sphere" since the late 19th century, particularly in the first part of 20th century. The new emerging "Asian Identity" was thus gradually strangled. Fourth, modern ideologies in China have been inevitably imprinted with the "Western-centrism," as demonstrated by "Chinese-centrism." Within this framework, communications between Asian countries were neglected. One point to be added to this, is that the Asian countries were isolated from each other largely because they were divided into two worlds by the hegemonic power during the Cold War period. Such a postwar world condition is still exerting its influence upon the relations between Asian countries. Therefore, residues of the Cold War and colonialism and neo-colonialism in any forms should be eliminated before we can discuss the issue of Asia.

The symposium in Tokyo was a forum which triggered off the debate over this issue. Exchanges within Asia will have profound impact on our societies. The "Under Construction" exhibition presented us a lively picture of the artistic field of Asia. In China, discussions about Asia are just on its way, which I believe will not only contribute a lot to the growth of the new self-identity of China in our own minds, but also urge the Chinese scholars to give genuine attention to other societies in Asia. Nation-state should not become the obstacle to the free communications between us. I sincerely hope that the discussion about Asia can be associated with art, social movements, knowledge-building, and other concrete social exchanges.

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Goenawan Mohamad

The question "What is Asia," like that of "What is the Orient," has been debated for many years — especially since the publication of Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*. I started to plan my paper with difficulty, believing that everything has been said before. I was thinking of dealing the question by linking it to issues on aesthetics

and politics (to make it more relevant to the focus of the event, which was the visual arts exhibition, "Under Construction"). But to my regret, I had problems doing my research to make a presentable paper on "Asia," aesthetics and politics. Hence, my decision to relate the topics with issues of modernity in Indonesia.

To my delight, the symposium was much better than I thought it would be. You had papers dealing with the arts, and I learned a lot from them. The panelists were excellent. The only problem was the audience. This has always been a dilemma. When you want a large audience (and you miraculously got it), you will have people with too different levels of information about the issue with a very limited time to participate.

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Yoshimi Shunya

This symposium was able to explore the ambiguous possibility of representing / exhibiting "Asia" and provide us with a more solid and complex insight into this subject, as we discussed it in the context of historical process of moving from colonialism under Western powers towards Japanese imperialistic invasion, and also in the context of current globalization, in which the cross-border movement of capital, culture, and representation is accelerating. For example, in Session I, Goenawan Mohamad vividly portrayed the process of how Indonesian gaze towards "Asia" emerged among the Indonesian intellectuals through their experience of objectifying themselves as "others" under Dutch colonial rule. He also referred to how they developed desires toward Japan and India and, through this process, came to accept Japanese imperialism. We examined how discourses on colonialism and orientalism were reversed, repeated, and eaten away. So, who and how has "Asia" been represented or not represented in the context of modernity? What kind of contorted relationship with postcolonialism / nationalism, or Cold War / global capitalism discourses has this brought about as consequence? Profound and perceptive questions were posed on such complex and multilateral relationship between "modernity" and "Asia."

In looking back at Sessions II and III, in which I participated as moderator, we were able to question how Asia is currently represented

and exhibited in the political framework of representational site, by referring to examples of art exhibitions, biennials, and triennials in Session II, and in film and performance art, as we extended our vantage point in Session III. Lee Yong Woo, Tatehata Akira, and David Elliott presented their views based on their experiences as they described the complicated conditions under which "Asia" has been exhibited and how opportunities to exhibit Asian art in a multicultural context has been increasing. Hence, the following topics were brought under intense review: proliferation of art events in the globalizing process and the possibility of their introducing a new approach to challenge the status quo in the art world, while at the same time, taking part in global capitalism and national strategies; or the proliferation of multicultural art exhibit and its effect of undermining Western-centric perspective on art that could lead to promoting decontextualization of globalism in turn.

I think I was able to gain from the two-day symposium which provided a high-level, as well as specific and actual accounts on the issues that led to an intense discussion.

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Lee Yong Woo

The Significance of a Broader Discourse on Identity

It is uncommon that art and social science meet for a discussion on the same topic in the same place. The subject of identity deserves not less, for it is worthy of only the most vibrant discussion.

What is important to the frontiers of identity is a homogeneous race that emphasizes its different homogeneous groups. Yet the frontiers of identity, until now, have been nationally defined. There have been no successful cases of the identity of a country or people imposing itself on a continent. If the territorial limits of identity were transferable from the concept of the nation, the people, the society, and the individual to the continent, what would its significance be? Would political tensions around the word "identity" continue if discussions were now centered not on the identity of Korea or Japan, but on the identity of Asia? Would it still be valuable to talk about the homogeneity of the identity of certain geography, religion, race, or people?

The symposium, "Asia in Transition: Representation and Identity," organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center, is a rare case of extending the limits of the discourse on the identity of a people or a national concept, a language or a racial concept to a splendid discussion on Asia. It has started an important momentum that confirms that such discussion can be empathetic and productive. This symposium and the exhibition, also organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center to coincide with the symposium, will be an important document, one that proposes responses to the problems of the national, and the international, and future identity.

As an art critic and a specialist in the human sciences, I have participated in quite a few discussions on identity. This time, however, I felt that something very different was going on. Previous discussions were serious yet, in all honesty, a foregone conclusion. They were a resume of the past. This time, we asked ourselves questions: Are all Asians the same? Does the Asian continent, with its three billion people living in different cultures, have a homogeneous history? On the one hand, these questions are insignificant, and, on the other hand, we hypothesize that discourses on identity can now unite the planet. We need to keep hypothesizing and asking these questions. Together with a broader and more concrete dialogue, it's important to hypothesize on the history of race and culture in Asia.

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#### Tatehata Akira

I have found this symposium most productive among the several symposia organized by the Japan Foundation Asia Center in the past decade (the first one was organized under the Center's former name, ASEAN Culture Center), in which I participated as both a panelist and an audience. This is more so because after several discussions among panelists of visual arts researchers, curators, and artists, including myself, the discussion reached a stage where the issues raised became rather repetitive. I would say that we were unable to unravel ourselves from the dichotomic scheme, when discussing different concepts of art or perception on modernism between the West and the East.

In this symposium, we had professionals from the areas of film,

performing arts and cultural studies among others, which enabled us to reexamine the issue of Asia from a broad perspective. Particularly, Sakai Naoki's keynote speech, which discussed the idea of co-figurative identification, illuminated what loomed in the backdrop of the dichotomic scheme, and facilitated the symposium to be open and approachable.

I suspect that Asia is perpetually made an issue, despite the fact that it does not hold any internal commonalities, because it is an impossible, yet an inevitable concept. If we were to divide Asia into Middle East, Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, examining the common attributes of Asia is worth our consideration. But our discussions on Asia cannot be satisfied at this level. Even if we deny this concept, the word "Asia" would surface like a ghost, so long as idea of the West stays with our mind. This had caused our debate on modernism of Asia to get stuck in a vicious cycle up to now. But the scheme of co-figurative identification irradiated how it is inevitable for Asia to take this as core issue.

In the session, in which I participated, panelists analyzed how "Asia" was utilized in the exhibition system from institutional and political perspectives, keeping a distance from the current art scene and maintaining a cool view. For a person, like myself, who participated in the art scene during the 1990s as a curator introducing arts in Asia, I was offered a rare opportunity to focus on the cultural power dynamics in the background of the scene. At the same time, I was enlightened by the presentations of other panelists. I am thankful of being able to participate in such a rewarding symposium.

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Tony Bennett  
Debating Identities

I was struck by how, in the very last question from the floor in the plenary session that concluded the Symposium, the panel was asked: what, exactly, is Asia? Together, I think with most members of the panel, I groaned inwardly — just a little — at the fact that such a question could be put. For if there had been a common thread running through the papers, and I think there was, it was one which, following the lead set by Naoki Sakai's introductory keynote speech,

held that there could not now, or ever, be a single 'correct' definition of Asia — no more than there could be such a definition of Europe or of America.

And this for the very good reason that regional cultural identities are, like all identities, shaped in the context of their relations to one another — which means that they are incessantly re-shaped, given new dimensions and meanings, since those relations themselves are in a process of constant change and flux. What Asia is now depends, in part, on how, in the myriad practices of representation through which identities are organised, its relationships to Europe are depicted — but, since Europe is not now what it once was, particularly in the context of current debates about the enlargement of the European Union, it is unable to furnish a fixed point of reference against which a single and fixed Asian identity might be constructed.

Yet I had some sympathy with the person who put the question. For if the central message of the symposium was that identities have to be seen in the context of their ongoing dialogic and mutually interactive relations with one another, the actual way in which the symposium was conducted suggested something quite different. For, over two days in which long presentations squeezed the time available for questions to a bare minimum, and in which dialogue between speakers and the audience was minimised through the screening of written questions by the panel chairs, there was very little evidence that the roles and identities of speakers and listeners might themselves become more fluid, interactive and dialogic.

Perhaps, then, the theme of the symposium might have been better conveyed had there not been such a clash between what Marshall McLuhan would have called the message and its medium.

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David Elliott

The "Asia in Transition" symposium benefited from the incorporation of a broader range of disciplines which included history, sociology and cultural studies — however inevitably (with the exception of the keynote) the focus on what constituted Asia was directed on Eastern Asia, India (a little) and South East Asia as represented by Indonesia. This was even more restricted than the