

THE 4TH
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제4회 아시아미술관장포럼



“You could never have told me what it would be like”

Staff and exchange between art museums and galleries in the Asia Pacific today

Alison Carroll

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Thank you for the invitation to talk today. I am very glad to be here, asked to speak about something close to my heart: exchanges between art museums in Asia, particularly from the point of view of the people who work in those museums.

I've given the talk the title “You could never have told me what it would be like” because I do think it is all about understanding, respect, and, most importantly, experience of another cultural situation. The quote is a real one from a senior Australian curator who we sent with an exhibition of Australian art to Kuala Lumpur. She had to supervise installation, do the condition reporting, do the press briefing, talk at the opening and give a public lecture, all well known tasks, and in an English-speaking environment, but she still came back to us with this comment of surprise and interest.

I am showing a selection of images of curators and other museum and gallery staff members from Australia and Asia, working together on various Asialink projects over the last few years. This is to give you something to look at, and also to stress that this side of our work is about the key element of people working together and communicating.

In our work in art museums and galleries we keep objects safely and encourage communication about them to an audience. The museum itself mirrors cultural communities in having its own core set of values and structures, but that it is surrounded, enriched and nourished by communication - or in other words, exchange - with others: with those across the office, or the street, or the country, or across national borders.

I will talk about three stages of exchange in art museums that all involve staff: first between museums, second, within the museum and third, beyond the museum.

There are three aspects of exchange between museums: literal staff exchange, project exchange, and then building future exchange.

First, literal staff exchange. This is an area increasingly explored, but still fairly new in Asia, and includes residencies, internships, and managing visits of groups of staff for say 7-10 days being built into museum experience and budgets. We had a meeting in Japan three years ago, with 30 art museum professionals from Japan and Australia, and the key recommendation was developing people exchanges, from curators and other museum people, to artists. There wasn't an emphasis on buildings or programs; rather the motto was ‘bodies not boxes’.

We have run three types of programs at Asialink that address this. The first is our residency program, with in this case Australian museum staff funded to spend up to four months in a host museum or gallery in Asia. People have gone to Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Singapore and China, and from almost all of these, projects have developed, colleagues formed, and international understanding increased. Funding is mostly from our Federal Government, though the sending museum covers salary and some costs, and the host generally looks after their visitor. The

funding for four months from us is around USD10,000. It is an exchange based on two-way learning.

We have also run an internship program for Indonesian arts managers, including museum people, coming to Australia over the last 10 years, funded through the Ford Foundation in Jakarta. They were selected by a partner in Indonesia, and placed by us in the most appropriate host organisations in Australia for around three months. Unlike residencies it has a more one-way focus, with the Indonesian intern there to learn. It had many good individual results, but the disadvantage is that infrastructure in Indonesia remains weak, so it was never an equally driven program. It was also difficult to develop projects out of it, which is a key desire.

We are also just finishing a program of having groups of Australian curators spend two weeks in Japan, meeting colleagues and making connections. From the earliest iteration of this, we now have a Japanese curator placed at an Australian State art museum for two years, funded by the Japan Foundation: Shihoko Iida from Tokyo Opera City Gallery, now working at the Queensland Art Gallery. That is a clever decision by the Japan Foundation in making sure Japanese art is seen in a strong way in Australia for the next 5 or so years.

We'd love it if some of these more balanced exchanges came to Australia more and would of course be glad to see more happening within Asia.

The next part of exchange between museums that affects staff is project exchange.

At Asialink we have toured some 80 exhibitions to around 15 countries in the last 20 years; that is about 250 venues. Most of these exhibitions have been initiated by us. They have three stages: preparing the program with partners in Australia; working with partners to prepare it in other countries, then putting it all into effect. Museum staff of all descriptions have parts in this.

We have some principles in this that are also important: the first is to balance what we want to show and what we think others want to see. To do this well, we have to take risks with our programs, to tread in new areas, to be brave.

The second principle is being flexible: we have to understand when things don't work not to insist, but to bend. People in many Asian cultures understand this better than Europeans for whom there is often just one way. We say to our curators who travel with our exhibitions, "if you find a situation you are not happy with, do what you can, but then go with the flow. You are a guest in another culture and you must respect that."

The third principle is perseverance. It isn't easy and you must just keep going.

To prepare these projects, we ask people to join us who have indicated some interest in our type of work. We point out an idea, or ask them for ideas, and then we discuss what they can do. We do think people have to want to be involved in our programs.

Within the museum or gallery, a major advantage for being involved is seen as professional development for staff, which is another way of building communication with others, seeing other cultures, and how they work, building networks and colleagues to work together on new projects after this. People in good museums love doing this. They get excited and see possibilities, and this influences others.

In practical terms we say to each museum, please bring to the project what you can. Everyone provides their curatorial capacity. A larger museum is expected to provide registration, packing and crating, some marketing, some conserva-

tion; a smaller one not so much. We have funds from our Federal Government to cover these costs if the museum cannot do it. But they are our partner; they own the project; they must love it and nurture it until the end.

If we are doing a joint project with an international partner, we either match-make ourselves, or encourage curators to get together to do it. Then the international curator matches their infrastructure with ours in Australia.

At its best, this arrangement is equal: equal intellectually, organisationally and financially. This has been the basis of programs we have run in Korea, Japan, and Singapore. We have had variations, because of different access to funding, in Vietnam, Malaysia and India.

The third stage in this of staff exchange between museums is nurturing a project through its life. For us, this means sending curators or other museum staff to each venue with our shows.

We always send the exhibition's curator to the first venue, so they test-drive it and see it works! Then we give the opportunity to their colleagues, always trying to spread the experience of working in a different culture. Working in a different culture is of course hugely different from just visiting or being on holiday. It is when you really understand difference, it is meaningful and exciting. It also gives more and different people the chance to meet with others and dream up new projects.

I now move to exchange within the museum and then extending it beyond the museum. A radical proposal at both ends of the experience.

First, cross-cultural exchange within the museum.

I worked as a curator in a State art museum for 10 years, with clear curatorial demarcations around what I could and couldn't do. I see this practice getting more extreme – what I call “the mystic of so-called professionalism”, with territory guarded, and communication and understanding stymied.

It was after I left that job in the State art museum that I learnt the business end of touring exhibitions, crating and freight and insurance. I learnt how to practically install art works. I learnt how to raise money and do budgets. I don't do any of that on a day to day basis, but I know how it works, can see when things are lop-sided or slow for no reason or too expensive, and it makes me able to do the main things of my job better.

I teach a curatorial class now, and I think I shock the students when I talk about the importance of understanding money. It isn't seen as an appropriate conversation. However if you know income and expenditure budgets, it means as a curator you decide whether you want that heavy work, or a better catalogue.

So, I have a recommendation that exchanges in art museums also, for staff, work within the museum. That once every six months, each specialist staff member spends half a day working with a colleague in another section. A curator working with the marketing team; the finance officer working with the conservator; the registrar working with the designers, and so on. Understanding their work, respecting it and experiencing what it means to do it.

If the finance officer sees why the conservator is taking so long and needing that special equipment, they are more understanding of the budget he or she is approving. If the registrar sees the way the designers need information set on a page, they might rethink the way they keep their records, so the flow-through is quicker and perhaps easier. The curator works with the marketing team and sees how that difficult concept needs to be clearer for the particular new

audience in view.

Lastly, a more complex project we are working on, that applies the ideals of being open, saying yes, taking risks, certainly being flexible and certainly needing perseverance, that encourages exchange for museum staff beyond the museum.

The Utopia project was developed by Japanese and Australian art and art museum colleagues in Sydney in 2008. The idea is including various levels of galleries and museums – from large to small, national to local – in a roving visual arts event to be held every two years in different cities of the Asia-Pacific region.

It takes as its model the Manifesta program in Europe, where cities bid to host the event and partner members bring their projects, art and artists to each different site as it moves around. Costs are shared, the administration is intense just once in each city, and then it moves on. It is based on a partnership, 'exchange' ideal. Unlike a biennale or triennale there is no problem with one site maintaining both the energy and financial commitment to a major on-going event.

The role of the local art museums in this project has to be central, but it enables and insists on the museums working with colleagues around the region, plus with smaller or different visual arts organisations in their own city and beyond. It insists on further exchange.

The project is in development stage now – with the Australian side raising funds to get the discussion going further. We hope to have more 'action' becoming apparent early in 2010.

In the Asia Pacific we have the wonderful freedom that museum practice was really developed elsewhere and for different contexts. So we can take what we think suits us, and leave the rest. Because they do it like "x" in London or Paris, does not mean it needs to be done like that here. So we can think anew.



Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 1. 전시 설명중인 제랄딘 발로우(가운데) 모나쉬 대학 미술관 큐레이터, 마닐라, 2008

Geraldine Barlow (curator Monash University Museum of Art), with Brook Andrew *Eye to Eye* exhibition Manila 2008

Fig. 2. 전시 설명중인 손 켈리(좌) 독립큐레이터, Alhamra Art Council, 라호르, 2006

Sean Kelly (independent curator, Hobart) talking about *From an Island South*, Alhamra Art Council Gallery, Lahore, 2006

Fig. 3. Fire & Life 프로젝트 참여 작가 및 큐레이터들

Artists and curators, Fire & Life project (India/Australia 1996-97) curators: lower row, left Julia Ewington, (Queensland Art Gallery); upper row, centre Shireen Gandhi (Chemould), Suhanya Raffel (QAG), Victoria Lynn (Art Gallery of NSW), Alison Carroll (Asialink), Chaitanya Sambrani



Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.

Fig. 6.

Fig. 4. 조안나 바크만(좌) Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory 큐레이터, 인도네시아 레지던시 프로그램, 2007
Joanna Barrkman (curator, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory) On residency in Indonesia 2007

Fig. 5. 큐레이터 디존 문다인(가운데)과 작가 2인, 도쿄 Hillside Forum, 2003
Curator Djon Mundine (centre) and two artists (Richard Birrinbirrin and Neville Gulaygulay), Hillside Forum Tokyo, with Spirit Country exhibition 2003

Fig. 6. 제이슨 스미스(좌) 호주 빅토리아 미술관 큐레이터와 에리코 오사카(우), *Living Together is Easy* 전, 2004
Jason Smith (National Gallery of Victoria) and Eriko Osaka (Art Tower Mito) co-curators *Living together is easy*, Melbourne/Mito, 2004



Fig. 7.

Fig. 8.

Fig. 9.

Fig. 7. 엠마 맥레이(좌) Experimenta 큐레이터, 서울 쌈지스페이스, 2005
Emma McRae (curator, Experimenta) with exhibition *I thought I knew but I was wrong*, New Video Art from Australia at Ssamzie Space, Seoul, 2005

Fig. 8. 나탈리 킹(좌측 두 번째) Gertrude Contemporary Art Space 큐레이터, 하루미 니와(좌측 네 번째) 및 작가 3인과 위원장, 도쿄도 사진미술관, 2004
Curator Natalie King (second left) with Chairman and curator Harumi Niwa (fourth left) and 3 artists, *Supernatural Artificial* exhibition, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, 2004

Fig. 9. 발표중인 조 버트 퀸즈랜드 아트갤러리 큐레이터, 큐레이터 레지던시 프로그램, 호치민, 2007
Zoe Butt (Queensland Art Gallery), Curator in Residence, a little blah blah, Ho Chi Minh City, 2007



Fig. 10.

Fig.10. 인도네시아 아트 매니지먼트 인턴들, 호주, 2005
Indonesian arts management interns to Australia, meeting Solo, 2005



Fig. 11.

Fig.11. 시호코 리다(좌) 도쿄 오페라시티 갤러리 큐레이터, 벡 딘(우) 시드니 퍼포먼스 스페이스)
Shihoko Iida (Tokyo Opera City Gallery) and Bec Dean (Performance Space, Sydney) prior to co-curatorship of *Trace Elements* 2008-9



Fig. 12.

Fig.12. 제랄딘 발로우 모나쉬 대학 미술관(가운데), 호주대사(좌) 및 알폰소 유첸코(우), *Brook Andrew: Eye to Eye* 전시오픈, 마닐라 유첸코미술관, 2008
Geraldine Barlow, curator, with Brook Andrew Eye to Eye exhibition, Yuchengco Museum, Manila 2008



Fig. 13.

Fig.13. 디자이너 아키라 이소가와(좌), 케이티 소머빌(우) 빅토리아미술관 큐레이터, *Printemps-Ete: Akira Isogawa* 전, Arts House, 싱가포르, 2005
Australian designer Akira Isogawa and curator Katie Somerville (National Gallery of Victoria) with exhibition *Printemps-Ete Akira Isogawa*, Arts House, Singapore, 2005



Fig. 14.

Fig.14. 본인 전시에 대해 설명중인 스테판 바우어즈 Jam Factory Centre for Craft and Design 디렉터, *Secret History of Blue and White* 전, Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, 2006
Stephen Bowers (Director, Jam Factory Centre for Craft and Design, Adelaide) speaking at his exhibition *Secret History of Blue and White*, Vietnam Fine Arts Museum, 2006



Fig. 15.

Fig.15. 나탈리 킹(가운데) Gertrude Contemporary Art Space 큐레이터와 작가들, 도쿄도 사진미술관, 2004
Curator Natalie King (Gertrude Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne), and two artists, outside exhibition *Supernatural Artificial*, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, 2004



Fig. 16.

Fig. 17.

Fig. 18.

Fig. 16. 작품설치중인 나탈리 킹(우) Gertrude Contemporary Art Space 큐레이터
Curator Natalie King, installing *Supernatural Artificial*, Tokyo

Fig. 17. *Fire & Life* 전시팀(수하냐 라파엘(좌) 퀸즈랜드 아트갤러리 큐레이터, 사이린 간디(가운데) 뭄바이 Chemould 갤러리
큐레이터)
Suhanya Raffel (Queensland Art Gallery) and Shireen Gandhi (Gallery Chemould, Mumbai) curatorial team *Fire & Life* exhibition

Fig. 18. 사이린 간디(좌) 뭄바이 Chemould 갤러리 큐레이터, 차이타냐 삼브라니(우) 인도 독립 큐레이터
Shireen Gandhi (Gallery Chemould, Mumbai) and Chaitanya Sambrani (independent curator, India) in Sydney, prior to *Fire & Life* exhibition



Fig. 19.

Fig. 20.

Fig. 21.



엘리슨 케를

아시아링크 아트프로그램 디렉터(호주 멜버른대학교)

호주 미술전시와 대아시아 작가 교류 분야 전문가이자 교수, 평론가, 작가 및 큐레이터로 활동 하고 있다. 호주 멜버른 대학에서 미술사를 전공한 후 교수로 재직 중이다. 유럽과 아시아를 비롯한 오스트레일리아 미술에 관한 다수의 저서를 집필하기도 했다. 호주 시각예술협회, 아트빅토리아 예술교육부와 국제자문위원회, 멜버른 대학과 북오스트레일리아 대학의 자문위원회를 비롯한 여러 곳에서 활동했다. 아시아링크의 설립자이자 디렉터로 재직 중이다

Fig.19. 알렉시 글라스(우) Gertrude Contemporary Art Space 디렉터와 동료들
 Colleagues in Thailand with Alexie Glass, (Director, Gertrude Contemporary Art Space, Melbourne)

Fig.20. Tokyo Wonder Site에 방문한 큐레이터들
 Visiting curators John Kirkman (Perth Regional Gallery), Lisa Havilah (Campbelltown Art Gallery) and Kon Gouriotis (Casula Powerhouse) with Yasuko Imamura, Tokyo Wonder Site, 2008

Fig.21. 방글라데시 비엔날레 Gold Award, 다카, 2004
 Bangladeshi High Commissioner to Australia, artist Michael Riley and Alasdair Foster (Director, Australian Centre for Photography) with Bangladesh Biennale Gold Award, following showing of exhibition *Photographica Australis*, Dhaka, 2004



Fig. 22.

Fig. 23.

Fig. 24.

Fig.22. Art Front Gallery 스태프들, 도쿄, 2002
 Sally Couacaud (curator, City of Sydney, middle row second from right) with staff of Art Front Gallery, Tokyo, 2002; Director Fran Kitagawa lower right.

Fig.23. 큐레이터 소피 오브라이언(우)과 로저 맥도날드(좌), 도쿄 AIT, 2005
 Sophie O'Brien (curator, Biennale of Sydney) at AIT, Tokyo, with Roger McDonald, 2005

Fig.24. 작가와 큐레이터들, *New Video Art from Australia* 전, 방콕, 2004
 Artists and curators: centre: Gridthiya Gaweewong (Switch New Media Festival), Julianne Pearce (Australian Centre for Art and Technology), and Alexie Glass (Australian Centre for the Moving Image), with exhibition *New Video Art from Australia*, Bangkok, 2004

Alison Carroll

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Alison Carroll has been an academic, critic, writer, curator and administrator of art exhibitions and artist exchanges with Asia for over 20 years. She has two First Class degrees in Art History from the University of Melbourne, and has taught there at various times since graduation. She has written many books and articles on European, Asian and Australian art. She has served on the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, Arts Victoria's Arts Development and International Advisory Committees, the Advisory Committees for Arts Management at the University of Melbourne and the University of South Australia etc. She established and is Director of the Arts Program at Asialink.