A Survey of the History of Japanese Art Collections in Australian and New Zealand Public Museums from the Mid-Nineteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries
Jennifer HARRIS, Visiting Research Fellow, Art History, University of Adelaide

The history of the collecting of Japanese art by fledgling Australian and New Zealand public museums and art galleries owes more to British tastes and colonial pride than to mindfulness of geopolitical proximity to Japan.

Generous local benefactors, captivated by the international ‘Japan mania’ of the late nineteenth century, contributed to idiosyncratic collections that reflected the donors' interests. It was rare for curators to have the scholarly understanding to make informed decisions on Japanese or Asian art in general, but such occurrences did transpire and therefore had impact on Australian and New Zealand collections. Happenstance played a significant role in acquisitions with mixed and surprising results.

This paper will consider the nature and range of objects collected in the colonies as well as the general propensity of curators to engage with Japanese art, and more broadly, Asian art.

The National Collection of Asian Art
Melanie EASTBURN, Curator, Asian Art, National Gallery of Australia

Plans for the National Gallery of Australia's collection of Asian art began in 1966 with a report by Daryl Lindsay, former director of the National Gallery of Victoria, outlining what the proposed gallery should collect. The forward-thinking report emphasised engagement with Australia's geographical region and recommended building a collection of South and Southeast Asian art, complementing but not competing with the East Asian holdings of state collections. The development of the NGA's Asian collection, its strengths and weaknesses, will be considered, as will its role in approaches to the display and study of Asian art in Australia.

More recently, the legislative and ethical capacity for Australian institutions to continue to collect historical Asian art have been challenged. Strategies to enable ongoing commitment to the art of South and Southeast Asia at the NGA will also be considered.
Creating Southeast Asian Art History
Charlotte GALLOWAY, Lecturer, Art History and Curatorial Studies, Australian National University

‘I am an art historian’ is met with vague looks and a polite smile when introduced to colleagues in Myanmar where I undertake my specialist research. Southeast Asian art history is a discipline that simply does not exist in Myanmar, or indeed across much of Southeast Asia. With Southeast Asian studies only gaining recognition as a specialist academic field in major western universities in the 1950s, Southeast Asian art history as a distinct discipline is still in its infancy. Tertiary courses that specifically deal with Southeast Asian art history are few, and locating them within universities is problematic.

The Australian National University is one of the few institutions to have offered courses in Southeast Asian art history continuously since the early 1990s. ANU’s focus on the Asia-Pacific region facilitated this but structural positioning of the courses within Art History inhibited cross-disciplinary engagement. In spite of these barriers, the personal commitment and interests of individuals have seen Southeast Asian art history develop strong inter- and intra-disciplinary approaches.

Drawing on over twenty years of experience of Southeast Asian art history, as a student at the Australian National University, curator, researcher and lecturer, this paper traces changes in approaches to study and research over the last two decades. Taking advantage of changes to ANU program structures Southeast Asian art is now readily accessible to all students. This in turn brings new issues to the fore when taking Southeast Asian art history out of its own disciplinary area. Deliberate decisions have been made regarding course content and structure to facilitate a cross-disciplinary engagement, however, there is still a nexus between Southeast Asian studies and art history.

Using Myanmar as a case study, approaches towards resolving some of these problematics at ANU are discussed. These reflections and contemporary observations offer a foundation for the future development of Southeast Asian art historical studies.

10:55 MORNING TEA

11:25–13:00 Session 2

(Chair: Stephen WHITEMAN, Lecturer, Art History, University of Sydney)

A ‘Barbaric Display of Oriental Magnificence’: Indian Art at the Melbourne International Exhibition, 1880–81
Cherie MCKEICH, Independent Scholar, Melbourne

This paper explores the collection of Indian art acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) from the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880–81 and what it reveals about historic attitudes towards Indian art in Australia. It will begin with an examination of the Melbourne International Exhibition within the context of the British interest in Indian art and design in the mid to late nineteenth century, before discussing the responses of Australians to the Indian displays. The paper will then focus on the objects accessioned into the NGV’s collection and discuss their role in promoting trade with India. It will conclude by evaluating the development of the collection from the time of its acquisition to the present day.
Selling New China to New Zealanders: Rewi Alley and the Art of Museum Diplomacy
James BEATTIE, Senior Lecturer, History, University of Waikato
Richard BULLEN, Senior Lecturer, Art History, University of Canterbury

Using the Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, this talk provides new perspectives on Chinese Cold War soft diplomacy during the 1950s and 1960s. At a time when there was no diplomatic recognition between China and New Zealand, we show how Chinese artworks and exhibitions were used to instantiate social and political relations between Chinese and New Zealanders and between Chinese and New Zealand institutions and organisations.

The gifts from New Zealander Rewi Alley (1897–1987)—one of the ‘Ten International Friends of China’—established the Rewi Alley Collection, Canterbury Museum, of some 1200 objects ranging over the full period of Chinese history and including everything from funerary objects and oracle bones to celadon-ware and furniture.

Canterbury Museum actively participated in this exchange, gifting rare skeletons of New Zealand’s large flightless bird, the extinct moa, and receiving a suite of furniture in return; returning Boxer Uprising uniforms; and hosting cultural visits and lectures.

1974 Revisited: Perspectives on Modern Chinese Art from Near and Afar
Claire ROBERTS, ARC Future Fellow, Art Theory and Criticism, University of Melbourne

The 1974 exhibition Modern Chinese Painters in the Traditional Style represents an early effort to promote the understanding of modern Chinese art in Australia. Initiated by the Professor of Chinese at the University of Melbourne and held at the University Art Gallery, the exhibition was a cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional endeavour that brought together paintings from private collections in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. In February 1974 in China the Exhibition of Black Paintings deemed critical of the Communist Party and including works by artists featured in the Melbourne exhibition, opened at the National Art Museum of China. Meanwhile, Australia had re-established diplomatic relations with China and in late 1973 Gough Whitlam made the first visit to China by an Australian Prime Minister, opening the door to greater dialogue and exchange. 1974 was a pivotal moment in China and Australia to reflect on China’s cultural and artistic past and consider its future.

13:00 LUNCH BREAK
Engaging with Asian Art – Case Studies from the 1980s and Early 1990s
Christine CLARK, Manager, Exhibitions, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
Caroline TURNER, Adjunct Senior Research Fellow, Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University

The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed an intensely rich, proactive and pivotal period in Australia’s engagement with contemporary Asian art. It was the period when Australia began to explore the vibrant practices of Asian artists and saw the establishment of key exhibitions that embraced the work of artists from the Asian region. These initiatives were set within a political environment that heralded Australia as ‘neither a fringe dweller nor an interloper, but mainstream partner’ within the region, and led to a reconsideration of the importance of Asia on economic, social and cultural levels. While Australia’s early 1990s aspiration to be accepted as part of Asia was perhaps ultimately overambitious, shifts in cultural policies and the development of these varied artistic initiatives provided a platform that had significant consequences and resonance beyond Australia. A number of the participating artists and curators involved have spoken about the importance of these events for cross-cultural exchanges of ideas and for Australia’s participation in contemporary art in Asia.

This paper analyses the effect of these experiences based on preliminary interviews with key players from the 1980s and early 1990s. It explores curators’ and artists’ voices from Southeast Asia, focusing on the Queensland Art Gallery’s first Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (1993) along with the Artists’ Regional Exchange (ARX) in Western Australia (beginning in 1987). The paper also explores the proposal put forward in some recent literature that such international exhibitions and exchanges serve as sites for experiment and art historical formation.

A Project Waiting to be Done: The Representation and Legitimisation of Contemporary Asian Art within the Queensland Art Gallery
Lisa CHANDLER, Senior Lecturer, Art and Design, University of the Sunshine Coast

When the First Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT1) opened at the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG) in September 1993, QAG director Doug Hall described this ambitious project as ‘a project waiting to be done’. Hall was suggesting that conditions existed for an institution to take the initiative and distinguish itself by focusing on contemporary Asian art. However, the Gallery was also taking a substantial risk in its commitment to this ‘unconventional’ collection area. Although the APT1 was praised by Australian and Asian critics for its ‘curatorial imagination’ and the significance of QAG’s initiative in choosing to ‘recognise and legitimise the modern artistic productions of the whole region’, the Gallery was also criticised for its approaches and for its own lack of legitimacy in moving into this domain. This was, in part, because QAG’s holdings of historical Asian art were limited compared to other Australian state galleries. Nevertheless, this lack in QAG’s Asian art and indeed overall collection, contributed to an impetus within the institution to, in Bordieu’s terms, ‘make a mark’ and distinguish itself within the field.

This paper examines the institutional and wider conditions that contributed to QAG’s initiation of APT1 and its contemporary Asian art collection focus. It considers reception of the Triennial and issues relating to the legitimisation and representation of this ‘cultural whole’ within the Gallery. By examining these particular historical developments within QAG this paper contributes to a wider historiography of Asian art in Australia.
Asian Art History in Australia: Its Functions and Audience
John CLARK, Emeritus Professor, Art History and Theory, University of Sydney

This paper will examine the institutional focuses of tasks of Asian art history, its place within universities in the broader art-historical training of undergraduate and graduate students, and in the diffusion of results of research to non-Asian art history specialists. Asian art exhibitions range from pre-modern historical and sometimes populist survey exhibitions to contemporary art exhibitions in state and national galleries sometimes organised as a part of country to country exchanges, as regional Asian survey exhibitions which implicate Australian contemporary art practice, or as an Asian inclusion in biennials such as Sydney, and in large scale triennials such as in the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane. These institutions are one of the bases for appraisal circuits, both domestic and external, for circulation of Asian and Asian-Australian art and artists.

Important parts of linkage structures remain unseen in the implicit membership of self-interested cohorts and funding bodies. Whilst the public political motivations of institutions and curators can be inferred, these do not always make explicit personal motivations. The relatively small size of the curatorial body concerned with Asian art in Australia with other partners in funding bodies and government bureaucracies has governing functions that allow use of the term ‘curatoriate’ and one of the gifts of art history back to art is to critically understand and re-appraise these circuits.

15:40 AFTERNOON TEA

16:10–17:45 Session 4

(Chair: Olivier KRISCHER, Postdoctoral Fellow, Australian Centre on China in the World, Australian National University)

Does Contemporary Asian Art Exist in the Museum? Take Two.
Natalie SEIZ, Assistant Curator of Asian Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales

In 2006 I presented a paper at the Annual Association of Art Historian’s Conference in the UK, under the title ‘Does Contemporary Asian Art History Exist in the Museum?’ Admittedly, the paper equivocally questioned where contemporary Asian art sat in the general collection at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) and hence the position of a contemporary Asian Art history in the Australian museum context.

Now it is 2015 and almost 10 years later. Asian exhibitions and collections at the AGNSW, throughout Australian state galleries and internationally are now being reconsidered and the traditional Asian art model within the museum context has been disrupted. In this paper I will consider how the AGNSW has changed since I presented the original paper in 2006 and how the landscape of Asian contemporary art has transformed. This paper will give rise to a discussion of how the study and research of Asian art in Australian museums has altered, not only in the context of controversial provenance issues that have arisen at this time, but also in a context of changes in governance.
Where is Islam in Australia's View of Asian Art?
Virginia HOOKER, Professor Emeritus, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University

In 2005, the Art Gallery of South Australia together with the National Gallery of Australia, published the beautiful book Crescent Moon: Islamic Art and Civilisation in Southeast Asia. It accompanied exhibitions at both galleries held between November 2005 and May 2006. In his ‘Director’s Foreword’, Ron Radford described the exhibition as ‘unique and pioneering’ and billed it as ‘the first international exhibition to profile the art of Islam from the most populous region of this faith in the world today.’

The exhibition was warmly received and the essays in the book reveal the quality of scholarship on the topic. But the most ‘modern’ exhibit selected for inclusion was from the very early twentieth century. Most of the exhibits were centuries old. The impression many viewers and readers might gain is that the significance of Islam in Southeast Asian art is confined to the pre-modern era. This impression is reinforced by the fact that it is very difficult to find examples of contemporary Islamic art from Southeast Asia in most of Australia’s public collections.

The reality is otherwise, as this paper will show. In Indonesia and Malaysia, the conscious use of the visual arts to express Islamic themes started in the 1970s. During the 1980s and 90s artists and critics developed definitions and a discourse of aesthetics which are little known outside Southeast Asia. The paper will briefly describe the position of Islam-inspired art in contemporary Indonesia and Malaysia, its spiritual dimensions, and the growing critical engagement with the field. Several of the leading artists claim their works engage with ethics as well as spiritual and aesthetic concerns. Little, if any, of these debates are reflected in the discourse about Asian art in Australian circles. In view of the ongoing focus on Islam in the context of national security in Australia, it is timely to balance the picture by including the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of contemporary Islam-themed art in Southeast Asia.

Confessions of a Part-Time Curator
Adrian VICKERS, Professor of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Sydney

The history of displaying Southeast Asian art to Australian publics goes back at least to the 1970s, yet has suffered from uncertainty as to which audiences to address, and how to address them. I will draw on my own experiences in, inter alia, Terra Australis (AGNSW 1988), Beyond the Java Sea (Australian Museum 1994), and Crossing Boundaries (various provincial venues, 2002–2003) to illustrate how problems of institutional commitment, promotion and local politics continue to bedevil the field. The enthusiasm of individuals has been matched by a collective failure of imagination at higher levels.

17:45–18:00 CLOSING REMARKS
Stephen WHITEMAN, Lecturer, Art History, University of Sydney
THURSDAY 15 OCTOBER, 2015 | University of Sydney

SPEAKERS’ BIOGRAPHIES
ASIAN ART RESEARCH IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

SPEAKERS

James Beattie
Senior Lecturer, History, University of Waikato

James Beattie is Director, Historical Research Unit, University of Waikato, New Zealand. He has published over 60 articles and chapters, as well as six books, including, with Richard Bullen, Visions of Peace: The H.W. Youren Collection and The Art of Chinese Soft Diplomacy (2014). Richard and James have a $434,000 Marsden project on Rewi Alley, Cultural Diplomacy, and Chinese Art.

James Bennett (Respondent)
Curator, Asian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia

James Bennett is Curator of Asian Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia and co-curatorial of the recent acclaimed Treasure Ships: Art in the Age of Spices. He was previously Curator of Southeast Asian Art and Material Culture at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and has worked as a professional theatre designer, tertiary art lecturer and community arts adviser on Melville Island, NT. His batik textiles are represented in public collections around Australia. James’ major exhibitions and catalogue publications include Crescent Moon: Islamic art and civilization of Southeast Asia (2005), Golden Journey: Japanese art from Australian collections (2009), Beneath the winds: Masterpieces of Southeast Asian art (2011) and Realms of wonder: Jain, Hindu and Islamic art of India (2013).

Richard Bullen
Senior Lecturer, Art History, University of Canterbury

Richard Bullen is head of Art History, University of Canterbury and research fellow, Canterbury Museum, New Zealand. He has published numerous articles and chapters on East Asian art theory and aesthetics, including on the Japanese tea ceremony, and a book on ukiyo-e, Pleasure and Play in Edo Japan (2009).

Lisa Chandler
Senior Lecturer, Art and Design, University of the Sunshine Coast

Dr Lisa Chandler is a Senior Lecturer in Art and Design and leads the Arts Research in the Creative Humanities (ARCH) research cluster at the University of the Sunshine Coast. She was the foundation director of the USC Gallery, has curated numerous exhibitions and published many book chapters and journal articles. She is co-curator of the major touring exhibition East Coast Encounter: Re-Imagining 1770. In 2014 she was shortlisted for the AAANZ small catalogue prize for Dialogues with Nature, which she curated. In 2010 she was awarded an Australian Learning and Teaching Council citation for outstanding contributions to student learning.

Christine Clark
Manager, Exhibitions, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

Christine Clark is Exhibitions Manager, National Portrait Gallery (NPG) and a Professional Associate, Centre for Creative and Cultural Research Faculty of Arts and Design, University of Canberra. Her museum work has predominately focused on contemporary Asian art and Asian-Australian art, and museum management practices. She was extensively involved in the first three Asia-Pacific Triennials of Contemporary Art (1993, 1996, 1999). Major projects include: Museum of Brisbane’s Echoes of Home: Memory and Mobility in Recent Austral-Asian Art (2005–2008); NPG’s Beyond the Self: Contemporary Portraiture from Asia (2011–2013); and Galeri Nasional Indonesia’s Masters of Modern Indonesian Portraiture, presented at NPG, 2014.
**John CLARK**  
Emeritus Professor, Art History and Theory, University of Sydney


**Melanie EASTBURN**  
Curator, Asian Art, National Gallery of Australia

Melanie Eastburn is Curator of Asian art at the National Gallery of Australia and a PhD candidate at the Australian National University, looking at early collections of Khmer art. She has previously worked at the National Museum of Cambodia in Phnom Penh and the Powerhouse Museum and Sherman Galleries in Sydney.

**Charlotte GALLOWAY**  
Lecturer, Art History and Curatorial Studies, Australian National University

Charlotte Galloway lectures in Asian art history and curatorial studies at ANU. She was a curator then registrar at the National Gallery of Australia, and on completion of her PhD Charlotte commenced lecturing at ANU. Charlotte established an undergraduate major and minor in Asian art history. Her course, ‘Asian art in-country’ has been run for the first time in 2015, with students travelling to Myanmar. Charlotte is engaged in museology projects and teaching at Yangon University and the Field School of Archaeology, Pyay, Myanmar. Her interests also include heritage issues in Asia.

**Jennifer HARRIS**  
Visiting Research Fellow, Art History, University of Adelaide

Dr Jennifer Harris currently teaches Asian Art History at the University of Adelaide. Her PhD dissertation examined the formation of the Art Gallery of South Australia’s collection of Japanese art within national and international contexts. She is author and curator of *Netsuke and Other Miniatures from the Japanese Collection* (2014) and the *Power of Pattern* (2015) at the Art Gallery of South Australia.

**Virginia HOOKER**  
Professor Emeritus, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University

Emeritus Professor Virginia Hooker FAHA is a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Political and Social Change, College of Asia and the Pacific. Before her retirement in 2007 she was Professor of Indonesian and Malay in the (then) Faculty of Asian Studies. She has been publishing on Malay literature and historiography and on Islam in the Malayo-Indonesian world since 1970. Since her retirement she has been researching Islam-themed art in Indonesia. Among her publications are: *Writing a New Society: Social Change through the Novel in Malay* (2000); *A Short History of Malaysia: Linking East and West* (2003); with Greg Fealy, *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook* (2006); and articles on Islamic art in Southeast Asia published in *Inside Indonesia, Artlink*, and elsewhere.
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Title Involvement</th>
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<tr>
<td>Olivier Krischer</td>
<td>Co-Convenor, Postdoctoral Fellow, Australian Centre on China in the World, Australian National University. He currently researches twentieth-century China–Japan relations through art, and recent artistic activism in East Asia. He is co-editor of Asia Through Art and Anthropology: Cultural Translation Across Borders (2013).</td>
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<td>Suzie Lingham</td>
<td>Respondent, Director, Singapore Art Museum</td>
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<td>Cherie McKeich</td>
<td>Independent Scholar, Melbourne</td>
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<td>Claire Roberts</td>
<td>ARC Future Fellow, Associate Professor of Art History, University of Melbourne</td>
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<td>Natalie Seiz</td>
<td>Assistant Curator, Asian Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales</td>
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Dr Susie Lingham is a multidisciplinary thinker, writer and artist, whose work synthesises ideas relating to the nature of mind across different fields, from the humanities to the sciences. In her various and diverse roles, she engages with the creative process intimately, and much of her work is to actively bridge different audiences and contexts. In August 2013, Susie was appointed Director of the Singapore Art Museum. She holds an MA (Honours) in Writing from University of Western Sydney, a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching Higher Education from NIE/NTU, Singapore, and a DPhil (Doctor of Philosophy) in Literature, Religion and Philosophy from the University of Sussex, UK.

Cherie McKeich recently completed her PhD in History at the University of Melbourne. Her thesis explored the exhibition of India in the late nineteenth century, with a particular focus on TN Mukharji, an Indian exhibitions official and museum curator. She has worked in collections management and curatorial roles at the Melbourne Cricket Club Museum, Museum Victoria and the Arts Centre in Melbourne, and is currently a research assistant in the Asian Art Department at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Claire M. Roberts is Associate Professor of Art History and ARC Future Fellow at the University of Melbourne. She is a historian of Chinese art and a curator specialising in modern and contemporary Chinese art and visual culture. Her most recent publication is Photography and China (2013).

Natalie Seiz is Assistant Curator, Asian Art, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and completed her PhD in the department of Art History and Film Studies at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include contemporary Asian women artists, particularly during the late 1970s – 2000s and Asian art provenance.
Adrian Vickers
Professor of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Sydney

Adrian Vickers is Professor of Southeast Asian Studies and Director of the Asian Studies Program at the University of Sydney. His research on Indonesian cultural history includes projects on Balinese art and contemporary Indonesian art. Amongst his publications is the book *Balinese Art: Paintings and Drawings of Bali* (2012) and a related on-line museum of Balinese painting (http://sydney.edu.au/heurist/balipaintings/). He is currently also a lead researcher in the Ambitious Alignments project on modern Southeast Asian art.

Stephen Whiteman (Co-Convenor)
Lecturer, Art History, University of Sydney

Stephen Whiteman is Lecturer in Asian Art at the University of Sydney. A specialist in early modern China, his current research explores the intersection of visuality and the built environment in the early Qing court. His first book, *Thirty-Six Views: The Kangxi Emperor’s Mountain Estate in Poetry and Prints*, co-authored with Richard E. Strassberg is forthcoming with Harvard University Press. He is also a lead researcher in the Getty Foundation-funded program, Ambitious Alignments: New Histories of Southeast Asian Art.