

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF JAPAN-AUSTRALIA VISUAL ARTS FORUM SYDNEY JUNE 2008

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Six areas of focus were articulated:

1. Focus on the Asia Pacific,
2. Focus on museum/gallery practice,
3. Focus on the issue of Knowledge,
4. The issue of Exchange,
5. The issue of Resources and
6. The issue of Infrastructure.

The meeting focused on 1-3 and made a recommendation for action for each (see following). Focus areas 4-6 have been integrated in the following report.

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### **Delegates to the forum:**

**Taro Amano** Chief Curator, Yokohama Museum of Art  
**Conrad Bodman**, Head of Exhibitions, Australian Centre for the Moving Image  
**Alison Carroll** Director, Arts, Asialink, University of Melbourne  
**Bec Dean** Associate Director, Performance Space at CarriageWorks  
**Max Delany** Director, Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA  
**Alasdair Foster** Director, Australian Centre for Photograph  
**Osamu Fukunaga** Deputy Director, The National Art Center, Tokyo  
**David Haines** Artist  
**Hisako Hara** Professor, Osaka Electro-Communication University  
**Catherine Harris AO PSM (NSW)** Board member, Australia Japan Foundation  
Inter changing with : **John Bowdler**, Board Member, Australia Japan Foundation.  
**Kathryn Hunyor** Senior Associate, Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design  
**Shihoko Iida** Curator, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery  
**Yusaku Imamura** Director, Tokyo Wonder Site  
**Reuben Keehan** Curator, Artspace  
**Rachel Kent** Senior Curator, MCA | Museum of Contemporary Art  
**John Kirkman** Chief Executive Officer, Penrith Performing & Visual Arts  
**Masafumi Konomi** Arts & Culture Department, The Japan Foundation, Sydney  
**Jin Kurashige** Artist  
**Akira Nakayama** Managing Director, Ishibashi Foundation  
**Jackie Menzies OAM** Head Curator of Asian Art, Art Gallery of NSW  
**Margo Neale** Adjunct Professor, Principal Advisor to the Director and Senior Curator (Indigenous), National Museum of Australia  
**Tetsuya Ozaki** Publisher/Editor-in-Chief, ART iT  
**Suhanya Raffel** Head, Asian & Pacific Art, Queensland Art Gallery  
**Junichi Shioda** Deputy Director, Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Museum of Art  
**Fumihiko Sumitomo** Senior Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (MOT)  
**Akira Tatehata** Director, National Museum of Art, Osaka  
**Hitomi Toku** Cultural Officer, Australian Embassy, Tokyo  
**Anna Waldmann** Director, Visual Arts, The Australia Council for the Arts

### Observers:

Mrs Tomoko Nakayama, Ishibashi Foundation  
Ms Chiharu Takemoto, Director, Japan Foundation, Sydney

## 1. Focus on the Asia Pacific

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### **Agreement on principles of:**

Investment in time and development of shared ideas across the region.

Reciprocation and partnerships.

Understanding the realities of the borderless artist and the borderless artform;

Understanding the importance of building in sustainability and maintaining energy and support.

Acting now.

### **Agreement on practice of:**

Professional exchange: curatorial exchange; youth exchange; jobs movement; internships.

Multi-lateral project development: building in touring circuits; regional prizes; popular events; usage of existing relationships, including sister cities and current alliances.

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### **Recommendation: THE UTOPIA PROJECT**

A project to provide an itinerant, multi-lateral, multi-layered meeting point and exposition for contemporary visual arts in the Asia-Pacific, providing access, discussion, collaboration, understanding, and public outcomes to the benefit of the region, the creative people of the region, and wide audiences. The focus is not on one institution or country; it does not need a large bureaucracy; it is flexible, adaptable, open to communities, focused on youth; it encourages capacity-building and understanding. It recognises the change from focus on the nation state to a wider, cross boundary engagement.

Practical options encompass a 10 year time span, with perhaps 3-5 main focus manifestations in 3-5 different centres of the region, as well as smaller interim events and stages elsewhere. If judged as very successful, it could be continued on.

Each manifestation could be bid for and all members of the community would be invited to participate. Organisation and half funding could come from each host. Other funding could be achieved through international partnerships, agencies, governments and philanthropic foundations. Broad oversight could be provided by a Utopia Project Board, of specialists from, say, 10 partner countries, and a very small secretariat to provide continuity, guidance and broad funding support gathered from broader membership bases.

An excellent model is the *Manifesta* program developed by the Dutch in the early 1990s and accepted by 30 countries of the European Union; its first iteration was in 1996 in Rotterdam and it now up to Manifesta 7, due in late 2008 in Trentino, Italy.

The model has synergy with Australian Prime Minister Rudd's proposal for an Asia-Pacific Community with this project idea working well within that wider context.

## 2. Focus on museum/gallery practice

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### **Agreement on principles of:**

Responding to the new: including new models of museums, different roles for museums beyond exhibition production, changing role of the curator.

Collaborations.

Acknowledging the complexity of funding/resources pressures, including responding to the tension between audience numbers (and funding focus) and critical reception, and the competition between the non-contemporary and the contemporary for support.

### **Agreement on practice of:**

*Exhibitions:* with a focus on the variety of show (solo/group; large/small; of time past as well as now; acknowledging different places; bi-triennial projects); collaborations; and the importance of touring.

*Personnel exchanges:* including meetings of specialists/natural groupings and curatorial training.

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### **Recommendation:**

#### **Exhibitions:**

Confirming recommendations of 2006 forum (exhibition exchange of variety and scale, including major exhibitions and special focus projects, noting the importance of clarifying roles and responsibilities through various models of co-curatorship, exchange of exhibitions, touring exhibitions with local partner input and noting the capacity for exhibitions to lead to collection development), and the addition of a special focus on historic and modern (pre 1900 and 20<sup>th</sup> century) work.

#### **Curatorial exchanges**

##### *Secondments*

A least two secondments from Australia and two from Japan within a five year period, recommended to have salary from home institution, travelling for research etc; with a 3-6 month duration. Support could be from Australia Japan Foundation for Australians and from the National Museum Network of Japan, supported by the Japanese Government, and by the Japan Association of Museums, supported by the Yomiuri Corporation.

##### *Internships*

Post-graduate (could be Master or PhD candidates on scholarships); seen as an apprenticeship for e.g. one year's duration; to be explored in each country; perhaps through the University Museum network. Tokyo University Museum and Tokyo University for the Arts are examples.

### 3. Focus on the issue of knowledge

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**Agreement on principles of:**

Need to increase knowledge of the past as well as current arts, including support of research of lesser known areas.

Need to create better sharing of and access to knowledge, including through translation as well as better public use of visiting specialists.

**Agreement on practice of:**

Engaging the personal: academic exchange, student exchange (see above).

Encouraging infrastructural engagement: through the education system, including schools; websites; publishing.

Specific project development: including inventories of the past; case studies.

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**Recommendation:**

**Website**

A website to address gaps in knowledge, with an archival focus, aiming to generate/encourage content e.g. through 'audience-in-residence' idea.

In practical terms, to have a paid editor/curator/designer/translator, be bilingual at first, starting with Japanese and Australian art, and spreading to include the wider region. Partners are to be explored. It would aim to move to bi then multi-level websites. It could be closely related to *Utopia* project (see above). An intern could be asked to do a scoping study and then develop a framework.