

Private Passions: Japanese Art and Gardens in Australia

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY
The University of Melbourne
18 September 2013

2:00pm – 2:15pm **Jaynie Anderson, Director AIAH, Herald Chair of Fine Art, University of Melbourne**
Introduction to the Symposium

Session one

2:15pm – 2:45pm **Jackie Menzies, Emeritus Curator of Asian Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales**

Kenneth Myer (1921-1992): Philanthropist and advocate

With the establishment of an Asian department at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1979, the Gallery resolved that an emphasis be given to collecting the art of Japan, a country with which Australia had increasing multitudinous ties. The Gallery's ambitions were realised through the enthusiastic and committed support of Kenneth and Yasuko Myer, beginning with Ken's 1980 donation of funds to acquire an important pair of Japanese screens that he and Yasuko had seen in an exhibition at the Kyoto National Museum. The screens are a lively representation of life in Kyoto in the 1660s and belong to the popular genre 'Views in and around Kyoto' (Rakuchu Rakugai zu). Ken's own taste was very much for the secular art of the Edo period (1615-1868), with his favourite painting being a hanging scroll of sumptuously robed beauty by Kaigetsudo Anchi (active 1700-16) which the Gallery obtained through his bequest.

From 1980 through until their tragic death in an aeroplane crash in 1992, Ken and Yasuko regularly visited the Gallery and enthusiastically participated in the development of the Japanese collections. Ken regularly donated funds for purchases, while he and Yasuko gave contemporary Japanese prints which they acquired on their frequent trips to Japan. This paper will present a selection of the art that entered the Gallery's collection through Ken's generosity, and personalise the Myer acquisitions as an enduring legacy of love and commitment, and an uplifting tribute to a committed philanthropist who was prescient in his advocacy for Australia's closer involvement with Asia. Encountering Australia: 'European Vision and the South Pacific'

2:45pm – 3:15pm **Wayne Crothers, Curator of Asian Art, National Gallery of Victoria**

Baillieu Myer: Connoisseurship and philanthropy in the refined aesthetics of Japanese culture

The NGV's Japanese collection is as old as the Gallery itself with its first major acquisitions made during the 1880's including Samurai armour and Buddhist paintings. Then in 1906 and 1909 artworks by Tawaraya Sōtatsu, Katsushika Hokusai, Utagawa Hiroshige and Kitagawa Utamaro acquired through the Felton Bequest established a legacy of artistic quality and philanthropy in Japanese art that has remained to this day. In 2012 the NGV opened its new gallery of Japanese art that is solely dedicated to the diverse aspects of Japanese culture and provides an invaluable forum for the education and understanding of Japan's unique visual aesthetics, philosophies and history.

One of the features of the new Japanese gallery is its outstanding collection of historical Negoro lacquer that could be regarded as the best of its kind outside of Japan. Initiated by Baillieu and Sarah Myer and Sir Roderick and Lady Carnegie with donations made during the early 1980's this unique collection has been gradually built over the last thirty years through the dedicated personal interest and connoisseurship of Baillieu Myer. In contrast to highly decorative Japanese Maki-e lacquer, Negoro lacquer comprises simple and elegantly shaped objects produced for daily and ceremonial purposes. Their constant use over long periods of time contributes to a random and worn appearance where the black lacquer undercoat becomes visible where the red outer coat has thinned. This naturally attained beauty brought about by age is highly appreciated as it exemplifies the spirit of wabi and sabi, an appreciation of beauty found in imperfection and a love for old and faded things. Gaining an understanding of this unique aesthetic is fundamental to understanding the philosophies of the tea ceremony, Zen Buddhism and Shinto nature worship and can be seen as a fundamental aspect of Japanese history and culture.

3:15pm – 3:30pm **Break**

Session 2

3:30pm – 4:00pm **Professor Emeritus John Clark, The Power Institute, Sydney**

Photographic practice and different trajectories of Japanese Modernism: the case of Hamaya Hiroshi (1915-1999)

By the late 1910s the adjustment of Japanese art practice into two domains mirrored in the distinction between Nihonga (Japanese style painting) and Yōga (Western-style painting) had broken down even as it was becoming institutionalized in national art exhibitions. Not only did several artists work between both categories but the introduction of photography and European avant-garde art practices meant that the notion of the visual as a domain of art changed, sometimes towards an abstract formalism, sometimes towards an expressive nationalism. Photography came into its heyday in the late 1920s through the widespread distribution of photogravure magazines and the absorption of constructivist, photographic collage and surrealist techniques. Hamaya Hiroshi emerged from this context. His work marks a useful trajectory through quotidian realism and flapper absurdism to wartime propaganda imagery. Hamaya was one of the few photographers to express regret for the direction taken by his wartime work. After 1945, he followed broadly three trajectories out of it: towards a humanistic visual ethnology of folk life in the severe natural environment of Northern Japan; towards a eulogizing of daily life in enjoyment and struggle; and towards a scientific distance from nature in large scale 'objectivist' examinations of mountains. The paper will examine the 'return to the folk' and its visual representation in his work as a type of Japanese responses to the crises of its own modern histories including those of its modernist art.

4:00pm – 4:30pm **Associate Professor Peter Eckersall, University of Melbourne**

Performance and the long view of nuclear space

Faced with the magnitude of disaster in the aftermath of the Fukushima earthquake and nuclear accident in March 2011, many people have sought to express responses through the arts. As time passes, the immediate memory of these events gradually fades, but we are also faced with the longer temporality of the disaster, one especially long-term effect being nuclear contamination. This will continue for generations and requires containment and vigilance. While the arts express grief and anger there is also a question of how they might address the durational experience of the Fukushima earthquake and the extended danger of radiation. This paper examines examples of work that seem to address the temporality of radiation and the evident desire to reoccupy the nuclear exclusion zone of Fukushima. It will examine works by Chim Pon and other groups, who despite radically different artistic sensibilities, share a concern with putting bodies back into this profoundly dystopian space. The paper argues that what Doreen Massey calls the spatial imagination can mark geographical sites with performances that contest and extend their meaning, and hope to rekindle ideas about the relationship of space to humankind.

4:30pm – 5:00pm **Break**

Session 3

5:00pm – 6:00pm **Professor Toshio Watanabe, The University of the Arts London**

Modernists' Passion for a Zen garden: The Ryōanji garden as a case for a transnational canon formation

The Japanese garden must be one of the most widely recognised icons of Japanese culture. For us now one of the most famous of these is that of Ryōanji Temple in Kyoto, which is often regarded as the greatest monument of Zen culture. However, this canonic status was argued only since as late as the 1930s and initially within a transnational modernist milieu. A number of Japanese modernist architects were involved in introducing Ryōanji to the German architect and designer Bruno Taut, who eulogized it and the Hawaii-based writer and garden designer Lorraine Kuck promoted Ryōanji very strongly from the 1930s to the 1960s. The garden designer and historian, Mirei Shigemori advocated the stone and sand style Japanese garden in his writings and in his famous garden designs. This has affected Shigemori's friend Isamu Noguchi deeply, who also seems to have been inspired by Lorraine Kuck's book and became a proselytizer of Ryōanji, even calling his own epoch-making Sunken Garden at Chase Manhattan Plaza in New York as 'my Ryōanji, as it were'. Post World War II impact of Ryōanji extends beyond art into contemporary music, as composers such as John Cage or Kaija Saariaho composed music on the theme of Ryōanji. Illustrations of Ryōanji garden even invade front covers of martial art books. This lecture is an attempt to see the phenomenon of 'the Japanese garden' beyond the normal discussion of it as an eternal symbol of old Japan, by emphasising the fluidity of its interpretation and while doing so, to examine the process of transnational canon formation.



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Biographies in order of appearance

Professor Jaynie Anderson, AIAH Director, Herald Chair of Fine Art, University of Melbourne

Jaynie Anderson graduated in History and Fine Arts from the University of Melbourne, and proceeded to a doctorate at Bryn Mawr College, where her thesis was on Giorgione. In 1970 she became the first woman Rhodes Fellow at the University of Oxford, where she remained until 1991 teaching art history. In 1997 she was appointed Herald Chair of Fine Arts and Head of the School of Art History, Cinema, Classics and Archaeology, in charge of creating a newly formed school in the Arts Faculty of the University of Melbourne. She remains committed to the pursuit of excellence in Renaissance scholarship. Jaynie hosted the 32nd international conference of art historians (CIHA) on the subject of *Crossing Cultures, Conflict, Migration and Convergence*, at the University of Melbourne, 13-18 January 2008. She has received grants from the British Academy (1981-82), the Leverhulme Trust (1993-4), and the Australian Research Council (1999-2003). She has been a visiting Scholar at the John Paul Getty Museum (1986), at the Centre for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery, Washington (1991), at the Harvard Centre for Renaissance Studies, I Tatti, Florence (2001, and 2003) and at the Institut national de l'histoire de l'art, Paris (2003). Jaynie has been elected President of the International Committee for the History of Art from 2008 to 2012.

Jackie Menzies, Emeritus Curator of Asian Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales

Jackie Menzies was Head of the Asian department at the Art Gallery of New South Wales 1979-2012, overseeing the development of the collections and their re-installation in new extensions in 1990 and 2003. Liaising with Ken and Yasuko Myer over the development of the Japanese collection was one of inspiration and pleasure. During the period of the Myer involvement with the Gallery, she mounted several Japanese exhibitions: JAPAN, Masterpieces from the Idemitsu Collection (1982); The Asian Interface, Australian artists and the Far East 1900-1960 (1983); Sengai, The Zen Master (1986), and MUNAKATA, The Woodcut Genius of Japan (1987).

Wayne Crothers, Curator of Asian Art, National Gallery of Victoria

Since 1983 Wayne Crothers has spent a total 20 years in Japan. He spent two years at Kyoto Seika University researching traditional Japanese art practices, completed a Master of Fine Art Degree at Tama Art University in Tokyo, lectured for six years at Musashino Art University in Tokyo and since returning to Australia in 2009 has held the position of Curator of Asian Art at the NGV. Other research and lecturing residences include the Australian National University, Canberra; Lafayette College, Pennsylvania; Joan Miro Foundation, Spain and Sichuan Arts Institute, China.

Professor Emeritus John Clark, The Power Institute, Sydney

John Clark, is Professor of Asian Art History at the University of Sydney where he will become Professor Emeritus from October 2013. Among his books are *Modern Asian Art* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), *Modernities of Chinese Art* (Leiden, Brill, 2010), *Asian Modernities: Chinese and Thai Art in the 1980s and 1990s* (Sydney, Power Publications, 2010; Best Art Book Prize, Art Association of Australia and New Zealand, 2011), and *Modernities of Japanese Art* (Leiden, Brill, 2013). He is working on *The Asian Modern*, a new comparative study of around twenty-five modern Asian artists across five generations from the 1850s to the 1990s.

Associate Professor Peter Eckersall, University of Melbourne

Peter Eckersall is Associate Professor in Theatre Studies in the School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne. His research interests include contemporary Japanese theatre and culture, experimental performance and dramaturgy. His publications include *Theorising the Angura Space: avant-garde performance and politics in Japan 1960-2000* (Brill Academic, 2006) and *Kawamura Takeshi's Nippon Wars and Other Plays* (Seagull Books, 2011). He is visiting fellow in the Centre for Interweaving Performance Cultures at the Freie Universität. Peter has also worked in contemporary performance for 30 years as a performer, director and for the last 15 years as a dramaturg. He is the resident dramaturg for the performance group Not Yet It's Difficult (NYID). NYID's performance and media works are widely known in Australia, Asia and Europe.

Professor Toshio Watanabe, The University of the Arts London

Professor Toshio Watanabe is Director of the Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity and Nation (TrAIN) at the University of the Arts London. He studied at the Universities of Sophia (Tokyo), Tokyo, Courtauld Institute of Art (London) and Basel, where he completed his Lic. phil and PhD. He taught at the City of Birmingham Polytechnic, where he ran the MA in History of Art and Design course. At Chelsea College of Art and Design, the London Institute (renamed later as the University of the Arts London) since 1986, initially as the Head of Art History and later became Head of Research until he was appointed as the TrAIN Research Centre Director.

Professor Watanabe is an art historian, studying mostly the period 1850-1950, and is interested in exploring how art of different places and cultures intermingle and affect each other. He has worked in the field of Anglo-Japanese relationships in art, and book publications in this field include:

- *High Victorian Japonisme* (1991, winner of the Prize of the Society for the Study of Japonisme),
- *Japan and Britain: An Aesthetic Dialogue 1850-1930* (1991, Japanese edition 1992, co-edited),
- *Ruskin in Japan 1890-1940: Nature for art, art for life* (1997, winner of 1998 Japan Festival Prize and of 1999 Gesner Gold Award).

Current external roles include Vice President of CIHA (Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art) and Chair of International Jury of Künstlerhaus Schloss Balmoral, Bad Ems, Germany.