

THE 5TH ASIA-PACIFIC TRIENNIAL OF CONTEMPORARY ART

2 DECEMBER 2006 – 27 MAY 2007
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Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art

THE APT 'PAST & PRESENT' TOUR
TEACHERS' NOTES

SUBJECT AREAS

Studies of Society and Environment; English

STUDENTS ATTENDING THIS TOUR SHOULD COME AWAY WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF:

- the range and diversity of artists, art works and ideas explored in the Asia–Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT)
- the important role that APT plays in building the Gallery's collections of contemporary Asian, Pacific and Australian art
- how APT works primarily with living artists; presents, in depth, the work of participating artists; commissions site-specific works; and develops ongoing relationships with artists in the region.

AND WILL HAVE:

- discussed and appraised works across cultures and media
- investigated the display of contemporary art in a gallery context.

INTRODUCTION

APT is the only major series of exhibitions in the world to focus exclusively on the contemporary art of Asia and the Pacific, including Australia, and the Gallery is committed to building cultural and artistic networks throughout the region. In most cases, APT works directly with living artists, with their inclusion in APT often marking the first time that their work has been shown in depth in Australia.

The Triennial is also distinguished from other international arts events by its collecting focus. It is one of the few recurring exhibitions of its kind based in a collecting institution, and the Queensland Art Gallery is one of the few public galleries in the world to collect contemporary art of both Asia and the Pacific. The Gallery undertook a major acquisitions program to secure works for inclusion in APT5, with approximately 70 per cent of works in the exhibition newly acquired, further strengthening and developing these collections.

This tour looks at a number of works in APT5 as well as selected works from the Gallery's Collection that have been included in previous APTs.

TEACHERS' NOTES



Ai Weiwei China b.1957 / *Boomerang* 2006 / Glass lustres, plated steel, electrical cables, incandescent lamps / 700 x 860 x 290cm (irreg.) / Site-specific installation for APT5 / Collection: The artist / Photograph: Natasha Harth

QAG WATERMALL

AI WEIWEI

CHINA B.1957

As extravagant symbols of affluence and aspiration, chandeliers have become a desirable adornment to the homes of China's increasingly affluent middle class and new rich elites. They are also installed in spaces such as hotel foyers and shopping malls with the aim of inflecting these new palaces of consumption with a sense of opulence. They are a fitting vehicle for Ai Weiwei's incisive observations on value and meaning and, where worth and status can be measured in crystal drops, bigger is definitely better. This chandelier playfully responds to its reflection and refraction in the water below and is a dazzling monument to contemporary consumption and pretence.

While studying at the Beijing Film Academy (1978–81), Ai became a founding member of the Xing Xing (Stars) Group, one of the first artist groups to champion freedom of thought and expression in post-Mao China.

Ai moved to New York in 1981, where he immersed himself in contemporary art and was quickly defined as a Neo-Dadaist. His practice was compared to Marcel Duchamp's provocative work, which scandalised the art world in the first decades of the twentieth century by critically addressing traditions and conventions of art and cultural stereotypes. In 1993, Ai returned to Beijing where he continues to work as an artist, curator, publisher, editor and architect. He is currently working on a major architectural project — the Beijing Olympic Stadium — with Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron.

Ai's works respond to China's rich artistic heritage by reconfiguring objects such as Ming and Qing dynasty furniture, Han dynasty urns and Neolithic vases. He frequently incorporates acts of destruction and reconstruction in the creation of his work. Often his reconfigured pieces are positioned in dramatic new ways in which notions of value and authenticity are questioned.

Ai's practice is shown in depth in APT5, allowing visitors the opportunity to view a substantial body of the artist's work.

Why do you think it is interesting or important for the Gallery to be able to show a number of works by an artist?



Bharti Kher United Kingdom/India b.1969 / *Rudolph and Bambi* (detail) 2006 / Bindi on painted fibreglass / Collection: Amrita Jhaveri, Mumbai

QAG GALLERY 1

BHARTI KHER

UNITED KINGDOM/INDIA B.1969

The term bindi is derived from *bindu*, the Sanskrit word for a dot or a point, and also carries the meaning of the numeral zero. The bindi in India is traditionally a mark of pigment applied to the forehead of men and women and is associated with the Hindu symbol of the 'third eye'. When worn by women in the customary colour of red, the bindi symbolises marriage. In recent times, it has become a decorative item worn by unmarried girls and women of other religions. Bindis today are seen in many colours and designs and are commercially manufactured.

Bharti Kher uses the ready-made bindi as a central motif of her practice. This tiny object is used to transform objects and surfaces such as this sculpture of a dying elephant. The elephant is revered across Asia and is often a symbol of dignity, intelligence and strength. In Buddhism the white elephant is associated with wisdom. Historically, the elephant was used to carry kings, princes and nobles and is thus associated with royalty. Across Buddhist South and South-East Asia, the elephant features in processions and ceremonies. In India, the important and popular Hindu deity Ganesha is shown with an elephant's head. Kher uses the bindi and the symbolism of the dying elephant to contemplate the effects of popular culture, mass media and consumerism on the culture of India.

Kher also employs the bindi to make large, wall-based panels. These sensual abstract planes swirl together to create extraordinary textured surfaces. In contrast to her sculptures, the panels reveal the visual pleasure the bindi offers as an optical device.

For APT5, 13 exhibiting artists created interactive art works and activities for children. Alongside Kher's work is her Kids' APT project called *Nothing is ordinary* in which the artist invites children to wear one her specially designed bindis.

Consider the relationship between Kher's work and the activity she developed for Kids' APT.

TEACHERS' NOTES



Michael Parekowhai New Zealand b.1968 / *The story of a New Zealand river* 2001 / Paua, capiz, lacquer and wood on a concert grand piano / 101.5 x 158 x 272.5cm / The Auckland Triennial Collection on loan from the Thanksgiving Foundation, 2001 / Collection: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

QAG GALLERY 4
MICHAEL PAREKOWHAI

NEW ZEALAND B.1968

Musical performance is an important Maori communal activity and a recurring point of reference in Michael Parekowhai's practice. The upright piano is of special significance as one of the most common objects to be found in *marae* (meeting place), particularly in the first half of the twentieth century. However, Parekowhai has chosen to work with a concert grand piano — an object associated with high European culture. The work's title has been etched into the piano's surface with inlaid *paua* (abalone) shell, a customary Maori medium often used today to make souvenirs.

The arum lilies scattered over the piano call to mind the flowers thrown on stage during an ovation and, in fact, the artist has commented that he dreams about Kiri Te Kanawa singing to its accompaniment. Traditionally associated with Christian piety and purity, the white lily is also a flower of mourning. By casting the lilies in black lacquer, Parekowhai underscores the flower's mixed iconography and gives the piano the sinister appearance of a funeral casket.

Michael Parekowhai's work *Ten guitars* 1999, which featured acoustic guitars with inlaid *paua* shell, was included in APT3 in 1999. His inclusion in APT5 highlights the Gallery's continuing relationship with artists through the APT project.

What do you think the inclusion of new or different work by an artist in two APTs offers the audience?



Eko Nugroho Indonesia b.1977 / *It's all about the Destiny! Isn't it?* 2006 / Synthetic polymer paint on MDF board / 1384.5 x 1862.8cm / Site-specific work for APT5 / Courtesy: The artist and the Queensland Art Gallery / Photograph: Natasha Harth

GoMA PARK ENTRANCE + FOYER
EKO NUGROHO

INDONESIA B.1977

Eko Nugroho makes paintings, installations, magazines, embroideries and murals in the city of Yogyakarta in central Java, Indonesia. A member of the young generation of Indonesian artists, his pungent, funny and independent art is acutely attuned to contemporary events. Eko Nugroho's major mural for APT5 is situated in the foyer of the Gallery of Modern Art and a second mural is on the lower level at the Park Entrance, near the Children's Art Centre.

Nugroho's embroideries are inspired by punk-culture motifs and youth clothing designs. He works in collaboration with a group of men from Tasik Malaya in West Java, who are professional machine embroiderers and who usually embroider caps or patches. These cartoon-like images show the irreverence with which many young Indonesians regard the political elite. Their speech balloons parody the rhetoric used by many public figures. Here, the intended pious sentiments are turned into biting dialogues that reveal the absurdity of contemporary life: 'Say hello and smile to your neighbour' is answered by 'Believe no body trust you'; 'We are celebrating our Independence day' leads one character to ask, 'Did you still have food?'; and in a barren landscape a figure asks, 'Who will be responsible for this?', and the reply is 'Nobody'.

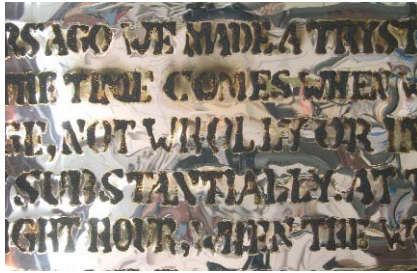
Nugroho draws on sources including dada-like photo-collage, Pop art and the counter-cultural comics of American Robert Crumb. From 2000 to 2005, he published *Daging Tumbuh* (Diseased Tumour) — a series of photocopied magazines for which he collects comics, drawings and collages from artists in Yogyakarta and beyond. Its anarchic variety speaks to the vitality and social engagement of young Indonesian artists. All eleven issues of *Daging Tumbuh* may be viewed in the Research Library.

For APT5 Eko Nugroho spent six weeks in Brisbane working on a number of projects including two murals, a postcard project and a comic for inclusion in the Kids' APT activity book.

The artist worked with a team of Queensland high school students to develop the mural *What do you want?* for GoMA's park entrance. The students initially worked with the artist to make an 84-page, handmade comic book responding to the question 'What do you want?', before developing and painting the mural based on this idea. Students from Shailer Park, Woodridge and Cleveland District State High Schools took part in the workshop.

Think about the idea of working in collaboration. How do you think the artist and the students would each have contributed to this project?

TEACHERS' NOTES



Jitish Kallat India b.1974 / *Public notice* (detail) 2003 / Burnt adhesive on acrylic mirror, wood and stainless steel frames / 5 panels: 198.1 x 137.2 x 15.2cm (each) / Collection: Shumita and Arani Bose, New York

GoMA GALLERY 1.3

JITISH KALLAT

INDIA B.1974

Public notice refers to a speech delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru on the occasion of Indian independence from British rule at midnight on 14 August 1947. Nehru had struggled alongside Mahatma Gandhi since the 1920s to establish an independent India, and he became the first prime minister. The materials and processes used to make this work are significant. Rubber adhesive cement forms each letter of the text, which was then ignited, melting and distorting the reflective surface. The choice of burning, rather than incising or simply writing the text evokes both the hard-won struggle for independence and its potential dissolution. The metaphor of fire and its myriad associations of death, sacrifice and renewal are implied through the process of burning. The partially distorted text, mirrored surface and human scale of the work directly involves viewers in the act of reading, remembrance and reflection. To Kallat, the text:

... is a beautiful speech full of praise, hope and love for the newly formed nation state. It also speaks of secularism, tolerance and peace which are very much in contradiction to the violence and sectarianism we have seen recently in India.

Do you think it is important to have the chance to see work by artists from other places? Why?

What do you think an art work like *Public notice* can tell us about historical and contemporary events?



Ah Xian China/Australia b.1960 / *China China — bust no.3* 1998 / Porcelain, cast from figure, with handpainted cobalt underglaze, reduction fired red copper glaze and clear glaze / 30 x 32.5 x 21cm / The Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art. Purchased 2000 with funds from The Myer Foundation, a project of the Sidney Myer Centenary Celebration 1899–1999, through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

GoMA COLLECTION DISPLAYS GALLERY 3.3 + 3.1

AH XIAN

CHINA/AUSTRALIA B.1960

Ah Xian was born in Beijing, China. He first came to Australia in early 1989 as a visiting scholar at the University of Tasmania's School of Art. He returned to China just weeks before the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. Deeply affected by these events, Ah Xian sought political asylum in Australia in 1990 with his brother Liu Xiao Xian, also an artist. Ah Xian and his family now live in Sydney.

Ah Xian began porcelain casting in the early 1990s at Sydney College of the Arts. In 1996 he returned to China, travelling to Jingdezhen — famous for kilns that for centuries produced fine porcelain objects and vessels for the Chinese imperial courts — to learn traditional techniques. An Australia Council grant allowed him to again visit Jingdezhen in 1998, where he worked for nine months with master potters, learning the process of making porcelain busts, including moulding from life, decorating, glazing and firing. The move to work in cloisonné, lacquer and jade became a natural progression in reinterpreting the great traditions of Chinese crafts.

In creating the 'China China' series of busts and 'Human human' figures, Ah Xian continues his long philosophical journey. He argues that he could not have produced such work in China. For Ah Xian, these works are the result of deeply felt life experiences in which he and his family have straddled two cultures — Chinese and Australian, old and new.



Ah Xian / *China China — bust no.10* 1998 / Porcelain, cast from figure, with handpainted cobalt underglaze and clear glaze, carved / 31 x 40 x 21.5cm / The Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art. Purchased 2000 with funds from The Myer Foundation, a project of the Sidney Myer Centenary Celebration 1899–1999, through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

Works from Ah Xian's 'China China' series of busts were included in APT3 in 1999 and acquired by the Gallery. The major work *Human human — lotus, cloisonné*, was later purchased by the Gallery and these works can now be displayed together to allow visitors an insight into the artist's larger body of work.

What do you think you can learn by looking at art works made by an artist at different times, a number of years apart?



Cai Guo-Qiang China b.1957 / *Dragon or Rainbow Serpent: A myth glorified or feared (drawings) Project for extraterrestrials no. 26* (detail) 1996 / Nine drawings: 300 x 200cm (each); 300 x 1800cm (overall) / Spent gunpowder and Indian ink on Japanese paper / Purchased 1996 / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

GoMA COLLECTION DISPLAYS GALLERY 3.1

CAI GUO-QIANG

CHINA b.1957

Cai Guo-Qiang uses fire and explosives in his art-making. He believes fire was the originating element of the universe, and was pivotal in the development of human civilisation. Fire links humankind and the cosmos and encompasses the duality of creation and destruction. The work displayed here was created by detonating gunpowder charges on paper, which left a residue of ash and scorch marks that recall the calligraphic forms of traditional Chinese ink drawings.

The history and culture of place plays an important role in Cai's work and is crucial in determining a specific project. For the opening of the 'Second Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art' in 1996, Cai was invited to make an ambitious site-specific gunpowder project for the Queensland Art Gallery, which involved a fireworks display located in and around the Brisbane River. This work on paper is related to that project. Cai is deeply committed to the spiritual role of artists and believes that they may perform inspirational and cathartic gestures on behalf of a larger community by reanimating the latent power of myths and shared cultural beliefs.

The gunpowder drawings are literally the residue of an act that took place at the Gallery in 1996. Think about what the relationship is between the drawings and the making of the drawings.



Michel Tuffery New Zealand/Samoa/Rarotonga/Tahiti b.1966 / *Povi tau vaga (The challenge)* (detail) 1999 / Aluminium, pinewood, corn beef tins, rivets / Two sculptures: 190 x 308 x 96cm (irreg., approx., each); two sculptures: 59 x 109 x 38cm (irreg., approx., each) / Purchased 1999. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

GoMA COLLECTION DISPLAYS GALLERY 3.1

MICHEL TUFFERY

NEW ZEALAND/SAMOA/RAROTONGA/TAHITI b.1966

These sculptures were made for the performance *Povi Tau Vaga (The Challenge)* at the 'Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art' in 1999. The performance was a collaboration between Michel Tuffery and Patrice Kaikilekole (Futuna/New Caledonia), and involved dancers from Brisbane's Samoan community, a group of Futuna dancers and Indigenous artists from Brisbane. The 'bulls' are armoured in branded corned-beef tins which refer to the particular significance of this foodstuff in Pacific communities. Tins of corned beef have become common items in the customary exchange of gifts at events such as weddings, feasts and funerals. They are imported goods which have acquired a cultural meaning. The recycled tins in the form of a bull symbolically question environmental issues, cultural change and the effects of global trade in the region. Tuffery described the performance as:

Creating a dramatic night-time 'bullfight', dancers and drummers from the islands of Futuna and Samoa shroud their respective 'bulls': taunting, celebrating, chanting, playing out the challenges and tensions that lie amidst Pacific island communities, past and present.

Essentially the sculptures and performance art work focus on complementing the dynamic fabric on which peoples of the Pacific have based their traditions, language and ceremonies. Cultural aspects from each island group throughout the Pacific are closely linked beyond the differing language groups, and the ability to communicate through practised art is continuous, symbolising our differences and identifying our common thread. Our art is live art.

Consider how performances such as *Povi Tau Vaga*, along with the sculptural works that were an integral part of the performance, represent the strong performance tradition of the Pacific region.