

Comment

著者(英)	Masahiro Ushiroshoji
journal or publication title	Senri Ethnological Reports
volume	54
page range	19-21
year	2005-03-30
URL	http://doi.org/10.15021/00001672

Comment

by **Masahiro USHIROSHOJI**
Fukuoka Asian Art Museum

Thank you, my name is Ushiroshoji. I'm going to comment, and so I have no title for my presentation.

I am the chief curator at the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. The Japanese audience here probably knows of it, but our important guests from afar may not know much about what my museum is all about, so I'd like to introduce myself and my museum first.

The museum was established by Fukuoka city in 1999. Before the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum opened, Fukuoka Art Museum, a 100% municipal museum, had held Asian Art Shows once every five years since 1980 in order to introduce contemporary art from all over Asia, excluding the Middle East. Now that the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum is opened, we plan to have an Asian contemporary art exhibition every three years as the Fukuoka Triennale. We are currently preparing for the second triennale. The number of contemporary and modern art works in the collection of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum is around 1,300 and increasing. Folk art and popular art are included as well. We are also carrying out Residential Programmes by inviting Asian artists and curators.

I have been working for 20 years to introduce Asian contemporary art to Japan, and I think that is why I was asked to give some comments here today. I hope I will have a chance to introduce some aspects of Asian art to our African guests.

As Mr. Ikwemesi stated, African governments do not subsidize art and have little interest in it. We are familiar with that kind of problem in Asia too. The relationship with the West is not praiseworthy. The West is considered as a big brother or even messiah. African contemporary art is introduced to the West in a poor way. 'Exotic' artists, who indulge themselves in an "image of Africa" favoured by Westerners and who provide stereotypical images of Africa, are selected and introduced in the West. Those who are considered important by African people are not selected. Globalism can often be welcomed, but on the other hand, Western standards as the dominant culture are forced on others. As a result, the weaker culture becomes anonymous under the name of Globalization.

Since *Magiciens de la Terre* in 1989, African contemporary art has been introduced to the West. But there are some issues to be considered. First, even if there is some room for African curators to work, most exhibitions are curated within the frameworks made by Western curators. Secondly, only the few artists selected for one exhibition are taken as representative of all Africa. Important and leading artists of

African modern art are hidden behind those heroes and magicians. Artists under Western influence are regarded as epigones and folk arts and popular arts are favoured and introduced.

I think African cultures should have their own judges and lawyers. African artists and critics should talk about their art in their own words using their own criteria. In order to make this happen, infrastructures of study such as courses in Art History, Aesthetics, and Art Criticism are necessary in African universities and institutions. Asian art only started to be introduced in the West in the 90s, and I think this is not so different from the situation with African art. While *Magiciens de la Terre* was being held in Paris with some Chinese artists, the Tiananmen Square incident attracted the world's attention and a few years later Chinese contemporary art started to be introduced actively as 'post-Tiananmen.' Japanese contemporary art had a lot of opportunity to be introduced in the West around the same time. It was also around this time that an Indonesian contemporary art exhibition toured the United States. What I would like to point out here is exchanges between curators. There are some criticisms that museums in rich countries such as Fukuoka, Brisbane and Singapore are setting up exhibitions using ample budgets only for the benefit of their own countries. In the case of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, we ask specialists from each country to be co-curators, ask their opinions and try to reflect them in the exhibition, though as Mr. Ikwuemesi pointed out, this may not be enough. Mr. Ikwuemesi mentioned that there is a power structure of West against Africa. This can be compared to the relationships between Japan/ Australia/ Singapore as against other Asian countries.

I would like to note the fact that curators from other countries are playing the role of commissioners in exhibitions in Asia. The Australian section in the Brisbane exhibition is supervised by a Thai curator, the Taipei Biennale and the Gwangju Biennale have Japanese curators, and the Fukuoka Triennale this time has a Taiwanese curator for the Japanese section. The Japan Foundation is now planning to hold an exhibition jointly with Asian young curators. In the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Mongolians and Cambodians stayed in Fukuoka on the Residential Programme this year. There are other residential programmes in Southeast Asian countries. It is certain that this kind of exchange will be promoted more and more in the future and I hope relationships of equality will be born from these.

Mr. Ikwuemesi voiced criticism here, again, of the term "African art," that true leading artists of modern and contemporary African art are hidden behind the magicians and heroes selected by the West. A similar problem exists in Asia. It is usually considered that art done by those leading artists is an inferior version of similar art in the West. When I curate an Asian art exhibition, I always try to avoid creating new heroes and magicians for it.

In Asia, especially as the world's attention is often focused on religious and

ethnic conflicts, we must try not to confine ourselves to the stereotypical elements, but branch out into the lesser-publicized parts. One particular example of this is a cow dung art piece from India by Subodh Gupta. In Indian culture, cow dung can be used to purify ground, and has other honourable uses. This would be thought of as dirty in Japan. We tried to introduce this in the first Fukuoka Triennale, but we were not able to do so. Even if some kind of art is hard to understand in one's own culture, we must acknowledge the fact and attempt to understand it.

Lastly, I would like to introduce a work by a Japanese artist named Ozawa shown at the Fukuoka Triennale. It's a Soy Sauce Museum, totally fabricated by Ozawa. It's a false museum. Maybe the art history told in museums is also something like this. I now conclude my talk by posing a question to Mr. Ikwemesi. Within Africa, how is African art seen? Is there any danger in propagating exotic images of Africa? Please touch upon this later if possible.