

TIME OF OTHERS

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART TOKYO; NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART, OSAKA;
SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM; GALLERY OF MODERN ART, BRISBANE

11 APRIL - 28 JUNE 2015; 25 JULY - 23 SEPTEMBER 2015; NOVEMBER 2015 - MARCH 2016; 11 JUNE - 18 SEPTEMBER 2016 RESPECTIVELY

The touring exhibition, 'Time of Others', jointly curated by Che Kyongfa, Hashimoto Azusa, Michelle Ho and Reuben Keehan, will have a significantly different lineup of artists for each of its participating venues. Some artists, such as Tozer Pak and Kato Tsubasa, will only be displayed once or twice, with others, such as Vandy Rattana and An-My Lê, involved in all four. Although this leaves my review limited to but one of four possible exhibition contexts, the project's novel approach complements the show's emphasis on diverse perspectives and, in general, the indisputably dynamic task of curating an 'Asian' art exhibition.

In its first outing, 'Time of Others' opened with Shitamichi Motoyuki's *Dusk/Dawn* (2013), comparative views of a glowing, calm sunset and sunrise in Chicago and Tsunagi. As promised by the wall text, these are images captured at precisely the same moment at opposing ends of the globe. Of course, the 'times' at which they were recorded differ, due to the system of Standard Time. Not so long ago, each region or town determined the hour based on the subjective position of the sun, but the onset of train travel made a global standard time necessary. Shitamichi's work is about the different views of people living in different places, yet the wide, open sky which blankets us all.

The cultivation of ephemeral beauty reached its peak in the exhibition with Miyagi Futoshi's *The Ocean View Resort* (2013), a beautiful video soliloquy from the artist's 'American Boyfriend' project. Over the sounds of lapping waves and a Beethoven string quartet, the protagonist tells the story of his return to his hometown on a small island in Okinawa. The work slowly but steadily covers a wide ground. The history of US military occupation, the protagonist's identity as a gay man, and a reunion with a childhood friend who stayed on the island, are all subjects in this fictional account based on Miyagi's life. Overall, it is a collection of visual and verbal subtleties surrounding the relations between people, both near and far.

As much as this exhibition pulls at the heartstrings, it equally aims to appeal to consciences. Take, for example, the massive punch that is Bruce Quek's *The Hall of Mirrors: Asia Pacific Report* (2011). A room is filled with clocks, ticking at varying speeds, which guide the viewer from entry to exit. The clocks move at different paces in order to indicate, statistically, the frequency of twenty-four different types of misfortunes in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, one clock represents how frequently rape occurs; another shows the occurrences of coronary heart disease-related deaths. The artist sources these numbers from publicly available data, but here, in a kinetic visual display, the numbers become more tangible. In the so-called information age, it does seem rather ironic that the plethora of available statistics—shocking statistics, especially regarding rape, abuse and other violence—are not cause for more change. At the exit, visitors are handed a receipt detailing the average rate of incidents from the duration of their visit. For one five-minute viewing, the receipt lists almost five deaths from influenza, seven from lung cancer, and one from HIV. Not only does this work cultivate a feeling of sympathetic urgency, it is also a unique way to connect audiences to the world outside the gallery.

In a very welcome change, the Tokyo exhibition includes a number of works carrying strong and clear political narratives. Photographs by Võ An Khánh provide a rarely seen point of view of a Viet Cong guerilla unit from the 1960s and early '70s. On the other side, An-My Lê's modern day images of everyday life on various US military bases, provide another, alternate glimpse at the ongoing impact of the US in the region. Lim Minouk's work, *International Calling Frequency* (2011) is named after her song composition, created as a political anthem that can be used for protests in any context, culture or cause. In the case of Natee Utarit, his immense still life oil paintings are said to operate in code, to bypass strict limits imposed by the Thai government that prevent potentially flammable critiques. Even in a politically suppressed environment, an irrepressible desire to communicate can often find a way.

The Japanese name of the exhibition, *Tanin no Jikan*, comes from a useful idiom about being mindful of other people's time, but as curator Reuben Keehan explains, the title is also a way to 'think of two concepts—that of time, and that of other people—and what it means to bring them together'.⁽¹⁾ This exhibition brought together concepts of time, humanity and morality that, as a result, frequently pointed toward matters of the heart.

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Lê An-My, *Ship Security*, US Naval Hospital Ship *Comfort*, Haiti, from 'Events Ashore' series, 2010. Archival pigment inkjet print on paper mounted on sintra. Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art. Purchased 2011 with funds from Michael Sidney Myer through the QAG Foundation. Collection QAGOMA.



Võ An Khánh, *Extra-curriculum political science class 7/1972*, 1972. Archival inkjet pigment print on silver rag paper. Purchased 2010 with funds raised through the QAG Foundation Appeal. Collection QAGOMA.



Miyagi Futoshi, *The Ocean View Resort*, 2013. Installation view, Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, 2015. Photograph Shizune Shiigi.

notes:

1. Reuben Keehan, *Time of Others*, ex. cat., 2015. p. 127.



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