

A person wearing a white protective suit is seen from behind, looking out over a body of water. The person's right hand is raised, holding a black pen. The background is a blurred landscape with water and a distant building.

All a Part

**THE 10TH ASIA PACIFIC
TRIENNIAL OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
(APT10)**

**REFLECTIONS ON THE
PROFESSIONAL
ENGAGEMENT FORUMS**

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FOLLOWING THE ALL A PART: APT10 PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT SERIES OF FORUMS, ASIALINK ARTS COMMISSIONED EMERGING WRITER CAITLIN HUGHES TO REFLECT UPON AND SUMMARISE THE KEY THEMES OF EACH FORUM. THIS SERIES OF WRITINGS RELEASED ITERATIVELY AND FINALLY AS DOWNLOADABLE DOCUMENTS, RE-CAPTURES AND FRAMES THE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ARTISTS, CURATORS AND INTERLOCUTORS. WE HOPE THIS WILL PROPEL CONVERSATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEXT ASIA PACIFIC TRIENNIAL OF CONTEMPORARY ART AND STIMULATE DISCUSSION ON THESE IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT ARE ALWAYS EVOLVING.

INTRODUCTION

In March and April 2022, Asialink Arts collaborated with the Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Griffith Asia Institute and WestSpace Arts to convene a series of three professional development forums on Zoom titled All a Part. All a Part coincided with the 10th Asia Pacific Triennial exhibition in Brisbane (APT10) at QAGOMA, which took place from December 2021 to April 2022. Curators, writers, academic interlocutors and artists took part in the forums; fostering a dynamic discussion on the key issues and currents that are influencing contemporary art practice today. Twenty bursary recipients from emerging arts backgrounds took part in these workshops, funded as a joint initiative between WestSpace Arts and Asialink Arts.

The forums were organised into three distinct themes. The first forum examined ideas of in/visibility in the arts, and the second focused on community and collaboration. The final session focused on futures: the entanglements between art and the future, and the future of art-making within the Asia-Pacific region. Across the three forums, artists' presentations, panels and breakout Zoom-room discussions revealed the many ways that these topics intersect and influence each other. Participants shared thoughts on how art can help to support communities, amplify new voices, and seek out new possibilities in making and telling stories.

Visibilities, communities and futures are topics that have become prominent ideas in recent contemporary art discourse, yet they have a particular resonance for our present moment. In the early days of March 2020, before widespread COVID-19 lockdowns took place in Australia, Asialink Arts convened the Public Displays of Affection: How Can Artists Rebrand Soft Power? conference. Public Displays of Affection examined notions of 'soft power' in arts and cultural initiatives within the Asia-Pacific region. As noted in the subsequent report, many aspects of the conference's findings took on additional significance as the world experienced ruptures caused by the pandemic.¹ Although the pandemic is far from over, after two years the theatres and galleries are once again open, as are Australia's borders for international travel. Festivals and larger arts events are coming back. Despite the challenges of pandemic contexts, the slow opening-up of the arts has, for many, signalled a new shift, with new opportunities in new contexts.

The themes of 'futures' – both as they are represented at APT10 and in the discussions for All a Part – show us what is possible in a new chapter for artistic practice. In the process of rebuilding, there is an opportunity for learning and for sharing different perspectives. At the time of writing and publishing this document, these issues are especially pertinent, as work begins on the consultation phase of Australia's new National Cultural Policy. Whatever is in the final form of the Policy, it is likely to have a significant impact on Australia's artistic engagement with the Asia-Pacific region.

With these contexts in mind, this publication aims to reflect on the intersections and entanglements between visibilities, communities and futures, as they were revealed to forum participants throughout the three discussions. It looks back on All a Part, but it also looks forward: to what might be possible for the arts as we navigate change and new opportunities. A series of three thematic reflections follows the three forums, and critically examines a key issue arising from each discussion. Finally, an overall conclusion summarises the main findings from the forums, and asks: 'where to next?' in the contexts of the issues and opportunities identified. Through this format, there is a chance to examine the current climate of contemporary arts production in the Asia-Pacific region; and the importance of facilitating access to the arts, engaging community in these spaces, and supporting the next generation of artists and arts professionals.

¹ Asialink Arts. Public Displays of Affection: How Can Artists Rebrand Soft Power? [conference report]. (Melbourne: Asialink Arts, 2020).

1. VISIBILITY / INVISIBILITY

Whose stories and what kinds of stories are made visible through the arts? Why are these narratives amplified, and what is missing or obscured in the process? How can we better understand the structures of invisibility as they manifest in the arts sector – especially through the curatorial, market and art-historical forces – and find new ways to address them?

These were the central questions that emerged in the first All a Part forum, centred on visibility and invisibility. Art's visual and multisensory dimensions can be used as a tool that brings attention to hidden issues, but the processes of making-visible sit within an arts ecology centred on judgement and perception. How artists and arts professionals can use their practices to find creative ways to disrupt the binary construction became an important issue for conversation. Through this, there is an opportunity to seek out new ways of seeing the entanglements in in/visibility, and address the issues that reinforce them.



LEGACIES OF INVISIBILITY

It is important to acknowledge and address the historical issues that underpin the tension between visibility and invisibility in the arts. As QAGOMA Curator and moderator of the first All a Part forum, Reuben Keehan, noted, the questions of what is made invisible through the arts are often centred on certain narratives, people, histories and regional perspectives. With this viewpoint in mind, he argued that ‘a lot of what we are talking about when it comes to regimes of visibility and invisibility is a legacy of the colonial’.

The colonial effects of making-invisible have roots in the museum and gallery, the academy, and the bigger constructions of art-historical thought. How we understand these legacies can help to inform the possible approaches that can be used to break away from such a frame.

Carol Yinghua Lu raised several important points on the legacies of invisibility, and how they impact the writing and understanding of art history; arguing that ‘narratives in art history determine what is visible and what is invisible’. In the process of assigning visibility to a subject in scholarship or curatorship, these elements of art history are presented both with and as authority. However, she noted that ‘a lot of the authority we assign [to elements of art history] does not really stand’, leading to hegemony and canonical constructions.

So that is also a kind of awareness that we are bringing to the art historical narrative: that art history is not only about certain canons of art forms, but actually is a constant flow of ideas, and how these ideas resonate with contemporary ideas simultaneously.

— Carol Yinghua Lu

Finding ways to critique this authority is therefore a crucial first step, but equally, there is a need to look beyond. In doing so, there is an opportunity to find new pathways of understanding, and new approaches for unmapping and re-presenting key ideas in art as part of a bigger picture. Through promoting awareness in art history and curatorship of the processes by which certain aspects of art are made invisible, there can also be strategies to address and reassess these legacies. Museums and art galleries have an important role to play in addressing imbalance; making-visible through curating, as well as unearthing and re/presenting canonical stories for art audiences.

MAKING STORIES VISIBLE

In acknowledging the colonial legacies of invisibility, how we make art visible – through art practice, curating and writing history – requires an active process of reframing and critique. The methods by which visibility can be achieved in the arts were linked by several panelists to the broader concerns of reframing regionalism and regionality. Vincente Diaz examined these ideas in his presentation, which questioned the perspectives of visibility and invisibility from Micronesia: a region that has ‘forever been obscured’ in history. Micronesia literally translates to ‘tiny islands’; but, as he argued, ‘islands are anything but tiny.’

Even the question of making visible our region within a history of invisibility is also problematic. It's problematic in the terms of recognition – how we're seen. And much of this actually has to do with how islands are understood, and how the ocean region has been understood in modern frames. ... [Looking at islands] from the vantage point of 'canoe cultures', we can ... begin to see a radically different idea of what it means to be human. And it's connected to radically different ideas of what an island is in relation to the ocean.

— Vincente Diaz



The ideas of ‘obscurity’ and ‘recognition’ can be read in the contexts of broader debates about the ‘centres’ and ‘peripheries’ of the art world and market. Where is ‘central’ for art, where is ‘peripheral’? Who determines these positions, and how is this authority (or lack of authority) assigned? And how do we challenge dominant frames of understanding place and regionality? It is useful to recall comments to a previous Asialink Arts initiative in 2021 titled Dekat-Dekat Jauh (So Close Yet So Far), which examined Australia-Indonesia arts engagement through a series of four conversations.² In the first panel of that series, artist Tintin Wulia, who was born in Bali, remarked that ‘this [regional] perspective [from Bali] trained me to “see outwards” ... because I’m not in the centre, there are always other centres’.³

² Asialink Arts. ‘Dekat-Dekat Jauh (So Close Yet So Far): A Conversation Series.’ Asialink Arts [online]. 27 February 2022. <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/arts/whats-on/2020/dekat-dekat-jauh-so-close-yet-so-far-a-conversation-series>

³ Caitlin Hughes, ‘Peripheries, encounters and entry points: Artists share perspectives on cross-cultural experiences in Australia and Indonesia.’ Asialink Arts [online]. 07 July 2021. <https://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/arts/resources/stories-and-insights/peripheries,-encounters,-and-entry-points-artists-share-perspectives-on-cross-cultural-experiences-in-australia-and-indonesia>

Finding ways to ‘unmap’ or decentre the dominant frames of regionalism is therefore crucial, if our aim is to find ways of understanding the many different modes of connection that exist between artists, cultures and locations. It opens up possibilities for new narratives to be formed, and there is an opportunity to amplify relations that link across national and regional boundaries. **To see ‘invisible’ regions from a new perspective – one that disrupts the hegemonies of invisibility – requires a critical evaluation of where and how we assess the meanings of visibility.** As several panelists noted, the idea of relationality between people – and between people and the environment – opens up a number of possible ways to acknowledge the connections and networks across oceans and between islands; through this process, subverting the double-edged frames through which visibility and invisibility are typically understood.

CHALLENGING BINARY POSITIONS

Som Sapurinya’s presentation examined ideas of visibility and invisibility in her own art practice; where she has explored the topic as it connects to issues in Thai history. What is important to her practice is the tension between objective and subjective frames of history. Through this contrast between subjectivity and objectivity, there are ways to test the limits of both strategies and perceptions: to reshape understandings and illuminate truths. In the presentation, she raised the idea of intangibility and ‘vibrations’; of ‘[feeling] the different narratives existing, but missing in our perception’. Through these phrases, metaphors and poetics, attention is placed on the multisensory experiences of art beyond visuality.

Later in the panel discussion, artist Brian Fuata returned to the ideas of vibrations; outlining how he has used his practice to draw on diaspora experience, and illustrating how notions of in/visibility can become a powerful creative tool to explore ideas of connection and dislocation, as well as representations of identity and culture. Concepts of vibrations, and playing with the possibilities (or impossibilities) of sight, he argued, ‘can become a poetic way of navigating ourselves and our practices’. This, in turn, raises important questions on ideas of representation and relation; on being seen, and how strategies of becoming visible are articulated.

By understanding visibility and invisibility through a relational perspective, it is possible to see the way that these metaphors might not be a binary or opposing construct, but have multilayered and entangled elements instead. Through imaginative, interpretive frameworks, there is the possibility for visibility and invisibility to coexist together; supporting and reinforcing each other through creative practice.

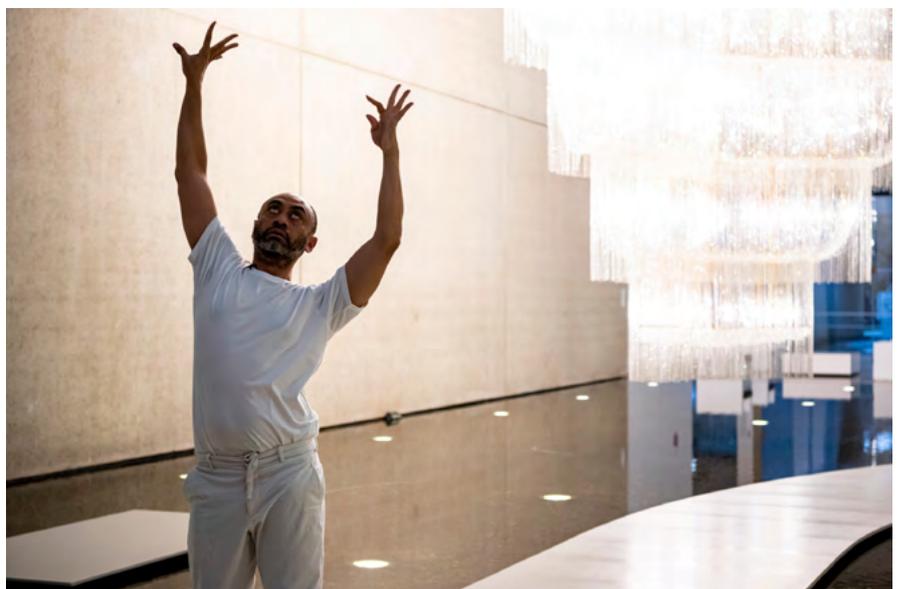


Photo credits: previous page, Vincent Diaz, Paafu Stories (video still) 2021. Commissioned for and copyrighted by the Air Canoe Exhibit, APT10. Image captured from ‘Paafu Stories 2021. Produced by Vincent M. Diaz, University of Minnesota Twin-Cities’ Youtube video

Above Brian Fuata, Aotearoa New Zealand/Australia b.1978 / Performance documentation of filming of Errantucation (mist opportunities) 2021 / Performance improvisations filmed at QAGOMA on 23 June, 31 August and 30 September 2021: three-channel HD video, 16:9, 15 minutes, colour, sound.

KEY ISSUE: IN / VISIBILITY AND ACCESS

Throughout the first forum, one issue was alluded to that requires sustained critical attention. This was the overlap between ideas of in/visibility and ideas of access. Whose voices are made visible, and what perspectives remain invisible? How does it link in with the perceptions of the broader arts community, and the access to opportunities that result? Themes of diaspora experiences as well as casteism were some of the issues raised, alongside economic concerns.

One anecdote brought into sharp focus the intersections between invisibility and access; a point by Lingikoni Vaka'uta. He argued that 'when you look at contemporary Pacific art, what the world sees is mostly coming from diaspora artists' in Australia and New Zealand. Meanwhile, the artists who have chosen to remain on the islands and work there are 'totally invisible to the outside world'.

It was noted that this may be due to lack of institutional support or crucial infrastructure for contemporary arts; therefore, artists have chosen to migrate for study and other opportunities. However, these questions of social and economic access still remain, especially as they relate to migration. The contrast between what Lingikoni Vaka'uta described as the 'bicycle system' (the smaller arts economies in the Pacific) and the 'truck system' (the arts economy in Australia) demonstrates this disparity.

How ideas of access should be addressed is a complex issue, to which – as expected – there is no singular answer. However, as the forum revealed, a starting point might be to find ways of telling the stories of those communities previously made-invisible, and for curators and art historians to present these stories through creative frameworks that enhance understanding.

2. COMMUNITIES

The second All a Part forum examined networks of community. Associations between community and the arts go to the heart of what is important for many aspects of the contemporary arts ecology: culture, family, identity and belonging. As the previous forum demonstrated, representation and visibility is an important way to acknowledge connections, and understand more of the social and political contexts that shape a work of art. Through processes of collaborative art practice, there are also ways to address and reassess the intersections between invisibility and communities; where art can be used as a tool to spotlight issues affecting the region. Connecting communities with art in the gallery was another topic of discussion, as was the importance of sharing knowledge and learning.

ART AND SOLIDARITY

One of the central themes that unfolded across the workshop was the ways that art and community-driven practices link to ideas of solidarity: bringing visibility to communities in crisis through art, and extending these networks of witnessing and storytelling into the gallery space. This was a process discussed in the first presentation by the Jakarta-based artist duo, Tita Salina and Irwan Ahmett. In their recent art practice, they have collaborated with communities on Jakarta's northern coastline to bring visibility to a community in crisis. At present, Jakarta's coastline is subsiding at a significant rate, due to environmental and infrastructure challenges. In the presentation, Irwan Ahmett noted that 'a long time ago, Jakarta was rich with crocodiles, but now we cannot see crocodiles – only garbage and plastic waste'.

Jakarta is a 'magnet' for Indonesians who want to start a new life, and it was argued that the city symbolises 'Indonesian dreams'. However, the disparities between the lives of rich and poor citizens in the megacity show the issues at play. Precisely because of this, the artists have collaborated with members of the public to collect community information, and have used flexible methods of art



making – public interventions, videos, photos, durational performances, walking and documentary processes – to draw attention to these issues. This, in turn, means that the artists combine their interventions with a practice centred on help, mutual assistance, and collaboration. Through processes of bringing together art and community-driven topics, they noted that 'the sense of community grows quite easily, and in the large scale it [has created] ... more solidarity and support to help each other without any kind of government roles'; offering artistic responses that focus not only on community, but also ideas of citizenship and social responsibility.

TEACHING, LEARNING, COMMUNICATING

Connections between art, solidarity and citizenship offer important links to ideas of knowledge-sharing and education, both in and outside of the classroom context. Farida Batool noted the significance of university art schools for community development. She argued that they are not only a space for scholarly and academic pursuit, but important too for their non-commercial contexts: contexts that are apart from the market-driven machinations of the broader art worlds outside of university. Through such an immersive space, it was noted, there are ways for students to find strategies through practice that connect to place. Speaking on a similar point Salma, Jamal Moushum argued that the true essence of what connects people to place is storytelling: 'it is about storytelling; lots of storytelling that connects back to village and the community'.

[Through processes of collaboration, research and learning at university], students will learn to start engaging with the people around them; how to research and make connections, how to feel for the place where they are living – not just to pass through it, but to actually feel it.
— Farida Batool

The emphasis here on non-commercial spaces demonstrates the value of social space to communities, and illustrates the way that dedicated places for learning and art appreciation have positive impacts not only on artists, but on the broader community too. One of the key issues identified in the previous section was that of access. Returning to this idea, the question of how to facilitate accessibility to these types of social spaces for the broader community should be considered.



Where are the hubs for storytelling, ‘lifelong learning’, and community-driven arts connections? Is it possible to extend the impact of learning-spaces to new contexts and communities, in order to facilitate greater understanding on the arts and its histories?

LOCAL AUDIENCES, LOCAL ENGAGEMENTS

The combination of issues surrounding access, community and learning-spaces extends to the gallery setting. For APT10, the ACE Project was established (the Australian Centre for Asia-Pacific Art (or ‘ACAPA’) Pasifika Community Engagement Project). This initiative aimed to connect Pasifika communities from across Brisbane and Queensland with the activities at the Gallery; where QAGOMA became a site for public programs, for artwork activations, and for bringing communities together through shared artistic and cultural events.

In the second presentation of the forum, QAGOMA Curatorial Assistant, Pacific Art, and ACE Project Coordinator, Ruha Fifita, presented on the main activities and events that occurred through the program. It was a Gallery-wide initiative; operating on all levels from curatorial and educational design, to installation, display and public programs. Queensland has the highest concentration of Pasifika peoples, compared to any other state in Australia. It is also home to the fastest growing Pasifika population in the country. In such a context, the impetus for designing programs, curatorial displays and engagement events tailored to specific communities is strong.

The ACE Project sought to ask: 'what role does engagement with local Pasifika communities play, and how can this be strengthened?'. In doing so, the ACE Project collaborat-



ed with local organisations to emphasise community-centred modes of learning. They found structures of knowledge-sharing and engagement that looks beyond Eurocentric models, and embraced interactive frameworks that are culturally safe, enriching and educational. This extended to all facets of the ACE Project, through a holistic focus on how to engage communities within a gallery and institutional context. The results from the program are significant: up to 70% of the audience participants in the ACE Project's programs had visited QAGOMA for the first time.

Through the sustained emphasis on 'learning mode' and a focus that centres on activation and interactions, the ACE Project highlights what is possible when spaces in the gallery are made welcoming and inviting for people from diverse backgrounds. This is especially the case when they are articulated and presented through a local, community lens: through citizenship and culture, and a methodology that draws from Pasifika perspectives. It brings together institutional and the grassroots audience perspectives, showing the potentials for how methodological approaches to public programming and gallery education could be tailored into the future.

KEY ISSUE: COMMUNITY AND CARE

Recent debates in contemporary art theory have often centred around ideas of care. This was not a topic explicitly explored by any of the panelists or artists in the forum, and yet it manifested through ideas of caring for the city and for the environment in Tita Salina and Irwan Ahmett's presentation; care and interest in engaging diverse communities through public programs, and for sharing stories, art and cultural knowledge through the ACE Project. It is also seen in the ideas of caring for local history, and indigenous history.

We can't decolonise ... We can never remove that part of our story. And neither should we. We're not going to smash down the statues. We need to remember those stories. In fact, there's so many stories that have been glossed over that we're working really hard to recover; to re-indigenise the space [so we can] bring these stories back for all of us [in the community], not just those of us [artists] who have learned how to paint.
— Vicki Lenihan

Unearthing and 'reindigenising' stories, and bringing visibility to them through sharing and learning, can be seen as an approach that helps to care for stories. The process of reframing these discussions is therefore one of the ways that art and stories can be understood as part of an ecology that cares for community, and that presents knowledge in new ways. Although Vicki Lenihan's reference was specifically to her own community, the broader idea of caring for forgotten histories and stories resonates with many of the workshop participants. How can we better understand this practice of care for community – in the many ways it manifests – and bring visibility to it in the gallery space?

Drawing attention to the social and spatial contexts where art is made helps to centre the stories that emerge from and through communities. It brings visibility to art, and finds meaningful ways of engaging communities with their stories. Bringing these exchanges to a global gallery setting extends the opportunities for learning, and for bearing witness.

3. FUTURES

The final forum in the All a Part series examined the idea of futures. This theme linked closely to the main focus of APT10, which was centred on the ‘future of art and the world we inhabit together’.⁴ Through emphasis on speculative, plural and imaginative connotations of futures, there was a chance to reflect on the way that themes of the future are entangled with art practice today, what the past can tell us about the future, and what the future of art means in the context of global threats such as climate change.

SPECULATIVE VISIONS

Two artists presented on their practices to the forum: the first was Fangas Nayaw and the second was Subash Thebe Limbu. Although both artists work through a different variety of media with different philosophical and theoretical underpinnings, there appeared to be a resonance that connected their practices and presentations. This can be seen in their attitudes and vantage points: looking to the future through hypothetical, imaginative frames.



For Fangas Nayaw, whose featured works were part of the *Between Earth and Sky: Indigenous Contemporary Art from Taiwan* exhibition at APT10, these modes of futurism are explored through speculative visions that combine the future with traditional practices; bringing them together to illustrate the malleability of culture through dance and performing arts. Ideas of movement therefore become important for articulating interpretations of the future.

⁴ ‘The 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT10): QAGOMA [Online]. Accessed 02 August 2022. <https://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/apt10>

Photo credit: Subash Thebe Limbu, *Yakthung people, Nepal/United Kingdom b:1981, NINGWASUM* (video still) 2020-21, Single channel video: 40 minutes (approx.), colour, sound, 16:9. Purchased 2021. Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art Foundation.

This future [I have constructed] is about how I understand right now, and creates a future situation to make people understand [that] we have to really look closer at the culture ... and the people who live with the culture.

— Fangas Nayaw



Subash Thebe Limbu argued similarly that ‘we need to imagine because of the status quo’; and that it is only through imagination that we can find the necessary tools and strategies to address societal issues through art, and find new ways of expressing sovereignty and autonomy. He argued that ‘We are not only trying to imagine an Indigenous futurism for Indigenous nations, but we’re also imag-

ining a future for our friends.’ Offering his own speculative visions on art and the future, Subash uses the medium of science fiction and astrology as narrative devices: as tools to reimagine. In this way, **the critical role that narratives play in shaping futures through art becomes visible**; interplayed with ideas of ethics and climate justice.

MAKING FUTURES

Ideas of narration, movement and time explored in the artists’ presentations show the many ways that futures are made and remade through art practice. The panel session was therefore a chance to talk through these processes of ‘making futures’: questioning how we can collectively mobilise to imagine through art, how ideas of futurism link to questions of regionality, and how ideas shaped by colonial legacies can be destabilised through future-centred frameworks. Lee Paje considered the links between ideas of time, coloniality and creation myths as they relate to a bigger theme of monumentality. Monumentality represented the idea of Filipino creation myths; and future-centred practices mean an opportunity to rethink gender roles within these narratives: ‘I mine stories and retell them so they can open up and allow for non-normative histories and identities. Through this retelling, gender norms are undermined’.

This notion of monumentality gives an opportunity to think about what kind of future we would like to remember through art. Drawing on the findings from the previous two workshops, it appears to be a future in which obscured histories receive critical attention, where art and society undergo a process of ‘reindigenisation’, where communities are given spaces to tell and narrate their own stories, and ways to reflect critically on the writing of history and the perspectives that are missing.



Prospects for a future art history were considered by Saubin Yap, who offered a number of important provocations on what a regional futurism looks like. Bringing the Indonesian/Malay idea of nusantara (meaning: the 'outer islands' within maritime Southeast Asia) to the discussion, he sought to examine what a nusantara futurism looks like. He argued that nusantara can be stretched from its origins in maritime Southeast Asia to encompass all of mainland Southeast Asia and the Oceanic region too, and that this extended map is a 'vortex' of porous geographic, historical and cultural influences. Through constructing a 'vortex' of futures, Saubin argued that it is possible to 'playfully destabilise' colonial narratives through these frames. Not only that, but there is also a chance to consider 'how we share within the region' through such a perspective.

These concepts of monumentality, futurism and unmapped 'spinning' regionalisms show some of the ways that futures can be reimagined through art, and how art histories can be reconstructed to contribute to this broader, future-centred project. It expands the possibilities for understanding art's role in shaping society, and for acting as a bridge across cultural contexts. **Questions of how sharing-through-art can connect us to the future are therefore one of the crucial issues to navigate, moving forward.**

‘WALKING BACKWARDS INTO THE FUTURE’

Through the idea of ‘making futures’ and sharing, there is an opportunity to ask how much older, longer cultural ideas can be integrated into the framework of artistic futures. This was already discussed through references to colonial ideas around creation myths, monumentality, and the idea of nusantara (an Old Javanese term), as well as in the two artist presentations. However, the comments by Shannon Te Ao crystallised the ideas further. He cited the Maori phrase, ka mua, ka muri – which translates as ‘walking backwards into the future’ – as a central principle for looking to the past to inform the future. He stated that Maori history in New Zealand ‘stretches far beyond the length of colonisation’, and that ‘to realise that we’ve been here longer than our struggles have been here is one of the most empowering ideas for me to carry forward’. The importance of ‘walking backwards’ is seen in the need for cultural and language revitalisation, and through processes of rewriting history. As well as this, it is also connected to the environment, and the positions of place.

What we try to do is remember that we belong to the land, and that the land and the water are our ancestors. ... Being oceanic, being symbiotic with the geography here is a very cogent and effective way of being, and reminds us of how to get along within this space, how to connect, and how to enjoy the spaces that we live in.

— Shannon Te Ao

Two arguments from previous sessions show us the importance of drawing on Indigenous knowledge to inform futures of art making: the first is the idea of ‘reindigenisation’ discussed by Vicki Lenihan in the ‘Communities’ forum,



and the second is the idea of relational exchanges that are illustrated through ‘canoe cultures’, discussed by Vincente Diaz for the ‘Visibility/Invisibility’ forum. In drawing on ideas of relational reframing through art history and curatorship, there are ways to spotlight the stories centred on sharing and exchange, and illustrate regional connections that span across significant time-distances, geographies and cultures.

KEY ISSUE: SUPPORTING EMERGING VOICES

How ideas of the future are made and remade through contemporary arts practice connect to bigger concerns about sustainability in the arts sector, and how emerging artists and arts professionals are supported to develop and realise their potentials in the future. Through the pandemic, there have been career disruptions across all levels of the arts sector throughout the region and the world. But for those who are at the beginning point of their careers, the impact has been of particular significance.

Through the disruptions of not just COVID-19, but climate change and other recent global events, artists have continued to use their practices to draw meaning from events, and connect through these experiences to a global audience. It is worth considering: what kinds of future-centred discussions might be prominent tomorrow, if there was greater visibility and opportunity – as well as a greater sense of artistic community – for those at the earlier stages of their careers? **How might perspectives [from emerging artists] provide us with new ways of understanding our current moment and our position in the world?**

These questions are not separate to the concerns raised in the Futures forum, but rather, are entangled in the ways through which we give voice to new ideas and perspectives. It is seen in the practices of mining old stories to present new ones, of ‘playing with’ art, of teaching, of speculating and imagining, and the broader ideas of ‘walking backwards into the future’. All of these actions and processes help to support an arts ecology, and the types of critical ideas that emerge through this environment. This, in turn, feeds back into the community, continuing the cycle. **Through finding ways to centre ideas of sharing and exchange within the arts ecosystem, there are ways to walk side by side with emerging and established voices, and to listen.**

CONCLUSION

The three All a Part forums invited participants together for a sustained and extended conversation on the key issues that are influencing contemporary art practice within the Asia-Pacific region, and to consider, map, and speculate on what we might encounter as we move towards the future. Although many of the panelists had been involved in APT10 – or prior iterations of the APT project – the conversation extended beyond this exhibition, asking us to consider the meaning of making art, and the potentials for the future.

As the conversations progressed, the links between the forum themes became clearer. Not only were the three factors connected in one way or another, but the significance of this interdependence was also revealed. Curatorial and art-historical work can bring attention to new art practices; increasing visibility. In a region where collaborative ways-of-working are well established, the impact of visibility (or invisibility) in the gallery has the potential to also impact art-historical perceptions of communities and places. What types of issues are revealed to us through art, and why and how this is done, also has the potential to impact visibility. Ideas of sustainability – whether it is cultural, linguistic, environmental or artistic – links community concerns of the present to the possibilities or issues of the future.

How do we draw on the artistic resources of the present to navigate the future of art-making? This was a recurring theme across all three panels. For many participants, the question of futures and art practices indicated a need to offer decolonial (or ‘reindigenised’) perspectives, and to centre Indigenous knowledges from across the Asia-Pacific region in any attempt at reframing art history. These perspectives tie into ideas raised in the discussion about education, learning, and finding methodological frameworks for audience engagement that are not founded on Eurocentric models. The importance of storytelling was noted by several artists: as a way to share knowledge and cultural ideas, but to recover lost stories too. The idea of lost stories became an important one, as it ties into discussions from the first session: on the legacies of making-invisible in art history, and the structures that have underpinned it. But after these legacies of invisibility, there is also an opportunity to use curatorship to engage in a process of making art practices visible.

The need to reframe regional perspectives was another key topic. Through Vincente Diaz’s presentation in the first session, as well as later comments by Shannon Te Ao and Saubin Yap to the third forum, the way that relations across geographies are understood needs to be reframed. As several panelists noted, *rather than following Eurocentric regions, there are opportunities to dissolve that map and replace it with a different kind: one centred on relationality. In this new map, there are opportunities to better understand how we can share and ‘play’ within the region.*

Following each of the three forums, critical reflections were provided on an issue identified in each of the All a Part themes. The first forum demonstrated the ways that invisibility was tied to access, and the ways that access to opportunities can hinder visibility in the international art arena. The second forum – through its emphasis on community – examined ideas of care, both for communities and the world we live in. And the third forum illustrated the importance of finding new ways to support emerging voices at the start of their careers.

Yet through ideas of revitalising culture, repositioning regionalities and finding ways to share across borders, we are pointed to another key issue: that of sustainability. And it is precisely through practices of care, facilitating access, and amplifying the perspectives from new voices that we can enable sustainability of the arts for the next generation.

Centring sustainability in arts practice – in whatever way it manifests – will therefore be crucial for building towards this future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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WEST SPACE

