

## Panel Discussion

# Creating Diverse Narratives: The Arts of Japan in Museum Exhibitions

### Panelists:

Dr. Yoshida Kenji (Director-General, National Museum of Ethnology)

Dr. Frank Feltens (The Japan Foundation Assistant Curator of Japanese Art, Freer Gallery of Art)

Mr. Stephen Salel (Robert F. Lange Foundation Curator of Japanese Art, Honolulu Museum of Art)

Dr. Khanh Trinh (Curator of Japanese and Korean Art, Museum Rietberg Zürich)

### Moderator

**Kito Satomi (Senior Research Chair for International Relations, Tokyo National Museum)**



Since 1998, Ms. Kito has been working at the Tokyo National Museum as an assistant curator for public relations, senior manager of international relations, and senior manager of public relations and press. She specializes in Museum Studies. Currently as a senior research chair for international relations, she is working on international exchange programs and exhibitions organized in cooperation with institutions outside Japan. She is also conducting research on exhibitions of Japanese art overseas since 1936. Her past exhibition projects include *Admired from Afar: Masterworks of Japanese Paintings from the Cleveland Museum of Art* (2014) and *Marcel Duchamp and Japanese Art* (2018.)

### Abridged Transcript

**Kito:** We will now begin our discussion about today's theme: 'Creating Diverse Narratives: The Arts of Japan in Museum Exhibitions.'

Dr. Yoshida gave the keynote speech 'Narratives of Japanese Art in European and North American Museums.' I would like to hear your questions or comments about this.

**Salel:** Firstly, I wanted to say I really appreciated your explanation about the introduction of the language that we use in discussing art in Japan, and the way that the roles of museums have evolved and splintered in various ways. In 1927, the institution where I worked was called the Honolulu Academy of Arts, and in 2012, we changed our name to the Honolulu Museum of Art. The practical reason for that name change was rather amusing. Apparently, visitors weren't coming to the museum very much because when they got on Google and typed in "Honolulu" and "Museum", our rival institutions would pop up immediately. But because the name of our institution didn't include the word "Museum," we appeared far down in the list of hits. So the change in our organization's name was a reaction to the kind of technological evolution in our society. However, more than that, the idea of a museum as being an academy—that is, a place of learning and self-growth—seems to have changed to something more connected to visual spectacle and ideas of fine

art that perhaps didn't exist in the 1920's. Therefore, I really appreciated the way that Dr. Yoshida discussed that range of concepts that we now refer to with the overarching term "museum." Do you still see those sorts of changes occurring in the terminology that we use to discuss art or in the way that we think of art?

**Yoshida:** Even though there is no actual term directly equal to art in a sense that is not existing in a community. For example, in some African communities, even now, they don't have an actual term equivalent to art. If we consider art as creative activities or the results of that activities – if we call them art, I do believe art exists in any part of the world. But in Japan, art history even now or up to now didn't cover the art in the world. So, art history covers only Western art, and perhaps Oriental art and African art haven't been included in the discussions of art so far. But now the situation has been changing – it is more of the world art history or universal art history. To change art into image, some art historians now are using the term Anthropology of Images. Now the scope of art is expanding, so I do think that the concept of art is now changing.

**Feltens:** I have a very easy or also very difficult question for Dr. Yoshida. Because you've studied Japanese art exhibitions abroad so extensively, I was wondering if you think of any very outstanding examples that are presenting Japan in a very compelling way, and/or if there are those that you found very problematic?

**Yoshida:** Problematic exhibition? My exhibitions are only good ones. So, the first one was the *Images of Other Cultures* which we created at the ethnographic gallery of the British Museum around 1910, and that was too, as I said. Today, I just introduced the first gallery, but the whole exhibition was divided into four. The first of those was "The Regression of the British Museum's Gallery", that showed how the West saw Japan, Africa and Oceania. The second exhibition gallery was entitled "The West seen by Africa, Oceania, and Japan." We introduced a lot of hybrid objects which so far were not included in the collection of museums. That meant we introduced a lot of Western elements into the objects. Of course our dress changed from kimono into this type of dress at the time of the Meiji restoration, and the signal change occurred even in Africa and Oceania. But as I said Japanese saw Japan as a part of the West, and they inherited the images of other cultures, images of Africa and images Oceania from the West. So, in the third room, we followed the change of Japanese view of Africa and Oceania. And the last gallery was called "Border-crossing Cultures Today" which showed a lot of hybrid objects created by artists in Africa, Oceania, Europe, and Japan. It was quite a challenging exhibition. It really changed the view of Japan or Japanese art. That is why I still treasure that exhibition. And so far, I haven't seen such a challenging exhibition even in Europe and North America. Perhaps I have a bit to add that evolution was a sort of the answer to the exhibition held at MoMA, The Museum of Modern Art in 1984, the exhibition called *Primitivism in 20th Century Art*. They exhibited western modern art, masks, and sculptures from Africa, Oceania, and America. It was strongly criticized and started a heat of discussion. Some exhibitions were the answer to that. *Magiciens de la Terre* exhibition at Pompidou in 1989 was a sort of the answer to that exhibition by Jean-Hubert Martin. And the *Images of Other Cultures* of mine was also a sort of the answer to that exhibition – the answer to the question was created by that exhibition.

**Matsushima:** Regarding Dr. Yoshida's *Images of Other Cultures*, there are regional differences when it comes to the way Japanese culture is presented overseas. It is the same within America and Europe, too.

I wanted to touch on this when I discussed the Duchamp exhibition, but there have already been many people within Japan who also regard Japanese culture as a different culture. Since everyone here today is

very literate and you can think for yourselves, that exhibition was not for you. When I talk to elementary or junior-high school students, I realize there are some Japanese people or people residing in Japan who have never lived among folding screens and sliding doors. Indeed, some people have never even heard of these words. When I think about this, I worry about how Tokyo National Museum is going to explain cultural properties and other exhibits to people 50 years from now. I would like to ask Dr. Yoshida your impressions about whether people in Japan regard Japanese culture with “images of other cultures.”

**Yoshida:** Our perspectives of different cultures or even our own culture differ according to factors like our age, gender, education and so on. For example, I think people living in Japan have many different ways of perceiving Japan, Japanese culture or Japanese aesthetics. In this sense, the problems involved in exhibiting Japanese culture in Japan are no different from the problems involved in exhibiting other cultures. As such, when we hold exhibitions of our own culture, it seems we are just substituting inter-cultural challenges for intra-cultural ones, for instance, or substituting challenges involved with external cultures for challenges presented by our own culture. We are always presented with the same problems when holding exhibitions. At the same time, *tokonoma* alcoves and tatami mats are disappearing from houses in Japan, for example. This is not an issue unique to Japan – cultures are shifting all over the world on the spread of globalization. However, I am fairly optimistic myself. This optimism springs in part from observing the activities of indigenous peoples across the world. As globalization advances, they have seen their cultures becoming completely westernized, with traditional cultures disappearing entirely. This ultimately raises questions about identity. Indigenous people have realized that their identity lies in the culture inherited from their ancestors. This has led to movements aimed at cultural revitalization. A glance at the history of humankind shows cultures constantly changing. In other words, people have always been complaining about ‘young people nowadays.’

**Kito:** Moving on to the next topic, Dr. Feltens talked about the Freer Gallery of Art in the capital Washington, D.C. and how its establishment was partly down to political reasons Roosevelt, who was then the president, had. I believe your institution also acts as a window to Asia in the capital. Have you encountered any limitations or difficulties when introducing Japanese art in your galleries?

**Feltens:** I think the most difficult things to display for us are *shunga*. As part of Smithsonian, the museum should be open to everyone no matter whether you are 2 years old or 62 years old. For that reason, we are discouraged from displaying what one could consider pornographic. And if we display them, which we did, it has to be displayed in special rooms where there would be disclaimer outside. You should not enter to the room if you are under 18. We always call our officer of legal counsel first to make sure that the institution is not being sued, and that happens quite frequently. Difficulties in terms of display are connected to materials. I mean prints are allowed to be only displayed for 3 months and then tucked away for 5 years whereas paintings stay out for 6 months and then sleep for another 5 years.

**Trinh:** How about displaying contemporary art? Is that something that you can do at the Freer Gallery of Art, or is it stipulated in your charter that you can't do that?

**Feltens:** We are allowed to display contemporary art. Because Freer gave his collection with all the regulations that I mentioned earlier, contemporary material usually gets displayed in the Sackler Gallery

which is the adjacent museum. The collection of contemporary art is also only housed in the Sackler, and so far is part of only that collection. That decision was made very consciously early on to keep those two collections separate. The Smithsonian is barred from endorsing private collections and/or contemporary artists if there is any potential of a value increase through our exhibitions. If we are displaying such works, we are looked at as if we were endorsing that person's career or sales. This is a no-go. But there is contemporary art and there are loan exhibitions of contemporary art in the Sackler, so there is a way of doing this without flat-out endorsing artists and collections.

**Matsushima:** As a national institute, I think Tokyo National Museum also has some things that could be described as proscribed or prohibited matters. I don't think there is anything set down in stone when it comes to restrictions on exhibits at Tokyo National Museum. There were originally guidelines from the relevant ministries with regards to exhibits, but now that Tokyo National Museum has become an Independent Administrative Institution, I believe we are allowed to think and act independently in a sense. Of course I am not talking about a command hierarchy, but from a curatorial perspective too, we are now able to make comprehensive decisions that reflect modern-day social conditions. There are many different social circumstances and political problems.

When we talk about contemporary artists, we often mean living artists, not deceased, who remain active to this day. There are a number of reasons Tokyo National Museum would display works by living artists. So there are no prohibitions or regulations preventing us from holding a *shunga* exhibition, for example. We consider various implications and positions, such as our position as a museum, our curatorial and academic policy, and our way of thinking about our visitors.

I think everyone's museum is the same, but we made a decision based on considerations of whether it would be ok to suddenly show *shunga* to elementary school children, or whether we should place restrictions on who could view the exhibition. We received an offer from the British Museum to hold their *shunga* exhibition, but we turned it down, probably because it was adjudged the exhibition would not be suitable for Tokyo National Museum at that moment in time. Personally speaking, I think a *shunga* exhibition could be possible in the future.

I have a question. Many Japanese galleries display handscrolls illustrated with battle scenes of samurai fighting in times past. Some of these have scenes of beheadings with blood spurting out, for example. In the US, are there any restrictions on showing bloody scenes like this?

**Feltens:** Let's talk about the blood first. In the past, we had a *Shuten-doji Emaki* exhibition which is very graphic in that sense. So the exhibition was preceded with the disclaimer saying that you would encounter a graphic material so that is your own risk basically or at your own. But it is not necessarily intended to stop anybody from entering because it's less graphic than if you saw a horror movie. The Freer is also quasi-national institution like Tokyo National Museum, so there is not any influence from the US government or from congress in the exhibition making. However, the Smithsonian has to be careful because it reports back to the government every year. If the senators say something negative about what you have done, that's not a good thing.

**Kito:** We have just been talking about exhibits that were difficult to display at the Smithsonian. Mr. Salel gave several examples like those during his presentation. *Shunga* or other themes of a sexual nature can be quite hard to handle, but I would like to ask you about your presentation. I tend to associate the Honolulu

Academy with ancient artworks or ukiyo-e, for example, but I was struck by what you said about *shunga*, and photographs and by that Hokusai and Utamaro were your last choice when it came to woodblock prints.

**Salel:** I would like to follow-up about a comment that I previously made about avoiding the most famous ukiyo-e artists. We are currently installing Hokusai's *Thirty-six View of Mount Fuji* in our Japanese gallery. For reasons of conservation and as a kind of experiment to focus the viewers' attention on individual prints, we will be displaying only one of the prints from that series at a time in a gallery with lots of information about the entire series throughout the rest of the gallery. And every 2 weeks, we will be rotating the prints. We will continue this series of rotations for the next 12 months. People who love these artists can see them. In addition, during my presentation, I showed slides of an exhibition on Hiroshige that was relatively recent. There are certain works in our collection, certain highlights that we are obligated to display on a regular basis, and we are interested in loaning to other museums within and outside the United States. We are very active in that. However, I want to talk about some activities at our museum for which we are not so well-known but which are equally important—exhibitions and other activities that offer a wide range of views about Japanese art beyond the artists who we know so well.

**Yoshida:** It was a striking contrast for me to think about whether we are curators or window decorators. To begin with, curators are receivers, so if asked to choose between trying to meet the expectations of visitors and taking a more challenging approach, I think we should choose the latter. The exhibitions introduced here are examples of this challenging spirit. If I were asked to do ordinary thing, I would rather leave it to someone else. I always want to take a challenging approach, so I agree strongly with your feelings.

**Kito:** I wondered how many tourists would go to a museum while visiting Hawaii, a resort island, but it seems that many of the Honolulu Art Museum's visitors are regular tourists. I think it must be difficult to plan challenging exhibitions if you want to pander directly to the demands of visitors. Museums with many tourist visitors need to consider the demands of these tourists too.

I think Tokyo National Museum places considerable emphasis on how to cater to tourists, including those from overseas, but it is not enough to just show the same things, the same highlights again and again. I think we need to strike a balance, but how does Tokyo National Museum do this? Mr. Matsushima, you have a lot of experience with exhibitions here. How do you go about striking the right balance?

**Matsushima:** Speaking personally, I don't think there is not much of a challenging spirit on the whole. It is hard to place value on things, including, those designated national treasures and important cultural properties. We can exhibit wonderful cultural properties and artworks then let the visitors decide what they think. However, when we conducted surveys on people from all different age groups and areas, the results revealed that most visitors want explanations. Before we turn to 'challenging' exhibits, we need to realize that many visitors are not even able to understand simple facts about objects.

For example, there is a black dial-type telephone placed by the window facing the garden on the north side of our museum. We generally don't see this type of telephone anymore. Elementary and junior-high school students probably have no idea what it is. We have to explain that it is a telephone. Listening to why the shape is so great or why the telephone is so appealing probably counts as a 'challenging' experience for these children.

Tokyo National Museum gets visitors from many different age groups and regions. We try to cater to all groups. Many of our visitors are indeed elderly people living in Japan, but we also need to serve people

visiting from overseas either. People visit from various areas of the world. This means we have to cater for a wide variety of needs. As a result, there is a lot of discussion about our aims.

Furthermore, many special exhibitions are co-sponsored exhibitions, where the funding comes from outside of museum's budgets. This leads to arrangements aimed at pleasing the greatest number of visitors or exhibiting items that will attract many people.

**Yoshida:** I don't believe every exhibition, gallery and museum always has to be challenging. Each exhibition and each institution has its own unique mission.

I mentioned that we aim to create museums that act like forums. This was a quote. In 1972, the art historian Duncan Cameron said museums had two choices - they could serve as forums or as temples. Over 20 years later, in 1994, I introduced this idea at a symposium. 'Temple' museums are places where people come to see objects and artworks that they know are valuable. 'Forum' museums are places where people gather so start discussions and challenge themselves. In this sense, I believe Tokyo National Museum is a temple and has to fulfil this role accordingly. Not all museums have to be forums.

However, since the adoption of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, museums and galleries have been expected to fulfil new roles. It was once believed that museums were institutions that collected, preserved and exhibited tangible cultural properties and heritage, but amid a growing awareness of the importance of intangible cultural heritage, 'people' have now become the theme of museums. This has led to a strong sense that museums need to attract many people and then act as a space where for mutual enlightenment and exchanges, where people can inherit the literally intangible cultural heritage of their ancestors, be it knowledge, experiences or memories.

A glance across the world shows more museums adopting the forum role. I feel this way when I look at Tokyo National Museum's activities as well.

In this sense, museums are now also expected to pass down intangible cultural heritage and build new heritage. Depending on the circumstances, it seems each institution will be required to act as a forum in its own way. I don't think all museums need to act as forums.

**Kito:** Different museums are expected to play different roles. Dr. Trinh, in the third presentation you mentioned that each museum needs to adapt its approach to the same contents and themes in order to respond the particular environment it finds itself in and the particular types of visitor it has. Could I ask you again about a question Mr. Kajiyama from Nakanoshima Kosetsu Museum of Art asked during your presentation?

The Rosetsu exhibition was aimed at Swiss people with a certain understanding of Japanese art. How would you change your approach if the same exhibition was held in Sydney, Australia? Do you have any ideas?

**Trinh:** I think in Sydney, I would have a harder time to sell the Rosetsu exhibition to start with. It is mostly because Rosetsu's works are mostly monochrome paintings and this is not something that I could pass the exhibition committee easily. Even in Switzerland, when I start talking about the exhibition to the marketing manager, she said we should use certain words to explain these paintings because they are monochrome. She said that they look like drawings and hence are less valued. We can't market an exhibition like that because we can't say it is high art and so on and so forth. I think for Sydney if the exhibition is going to take place, we will probably have to modify the whole approach. We would not only show Rosetsu but would have to do what I don't like to do, which is to show him as one of the eccentrics. We would sell it under the

aspect of eccentricism, and this is what we have tried to get away from doing in Switzerland. But for the audience, if it is not familiar with or it is not accustomed to see monochrome paintings, first they would think this is Chinese art. How can you explain the difference for a normal audience? That is already not easy, so what you have to do is probably to sell it under another aspect.

**Feltens:** After the success of Rosetsu do you think your future project have become easier to sell to your leadership at the museum and also to your audience in Zurich?

**Trinh:** I don't have a bonus now to do whatever exhibition I want to do. My next exhibition is completely different. It will be about narrative arts. Again this is something that is not well-known and therefore I would like to show in in Switzerland. Rosetsu was so successful because Swiss people are so enthusiastic about Zen. Everything that has something to do with Zen is fine. So the exhibition has garnered a lot of interest. The next challenge for me is how to sell narrative arts. It's something that people don't associate with Japanese art until now. That would be the next challenge. It's not easy. It doesn't get easier. Each project has a completely different set of challenges, and every time you have to find a way how to make it palatable, first for the museum leadership and then for the audience.

**Kito:** You talked about the difficulties of selling the idea of a Rosetsu exhibition in Sydney, but if you get it accepted, then one key point would be how the marketing people would promote such an exhibition. We talked earlier about the expectations we face and how we should deal with challenging materials, but I would like to hear about your experiences of trying to reach agreements with people in marketing or sales who have different opinions.

**Matsushima:** A few years ago we held a *Choju Giga* (handscroll paintings of Frolicking Animals) exhibition. At the time, marketing people wanted to sell the *Frolicking Animals* as 'the forerunner of manga.' This catchphrase had been used by the British Museum, but in the end we agreed to construct the exhibition based on the conviction that *Choju Giga* was not 'the forerunner of manga.' The co-organizers of the exhibition accepted our opinion. I am looking forward to seeing how *Choju Giga* will be handled next time around.

**Kito:** You will see. Does anyone have any comments?

**Feltens:** Let me give you some comments from my recent experience about pitching difficult exhibitions to the leadership, thinking about the PR and the marketability of exhibition. The Tomioka Tessai exhibition that opens in two months was a very hard pitch to my colleagues and also to the museum's leadership, the marketing, design team and everybody else. First of all, the team didn't quite get what Tessai was about, which I'm not still sure if they do, but it is all work in progress. I think the pitch started working when they actually saw the pictures of Tessai. They realized that he was a strange individual and a critic guy, and then they connected such his personality to his paintings. When we decided to give them more leeway in design so that the designers could basically do not go crazy but go out a little more than we usually want them to, everybody was happy. We'll see what the show is going to look like.

**Salel:** Regarding Mr. Matsushima's comment about the *Choju-Giga Emaki*, I was really interested in what he said. It's something that I'm thinking about nowadays in planning our upcoming manga exhibition, because this is actually the first time for us in Honolulu to present a manga exhibition in a large scale and to look at

different aspects of the medium. In some ways, the show is very focused. It's talking about manga created for and about women, and it has a certain social and political layer to it. At the same time, however, we've decided to have other galleries throughout the museum that show other aspects of what we call manga. And we actually will have one gallery where we show a *Choju-Giga Emaki*, Hokusai's sketchbooks, and the prints of artists like Kuniyoshi who occasionally worked in a Toba-e style. In doing that, we are not trying to show a lineage per se, because that would be a kind of fool's errand, but to show how, in some works of traditional Japanese art, there is a kind of sensibility that is connected to modern and contemporary manga. Now does that connection validate contemporary manga as fine art? No, not necessarily. However, it's interesting to look at these works from different time periods and see connections between them. And without offering any concrete explanations of how they're related, it's a good way to get people talking and asking questions about those connections.

**Kito:** Dr. Yoshida talked about Tokyo National Museum's role as a treasure house, but Mr. Matsushima, you also spoke about planning the very challenging Marcel Duchamp and Japanese Art exhibition in your presentation. When you planned the exhibition, you had an idea that the way of viewing art does depend on the person. Is there anything you would like to add here?

**Matsushima:** I understood that it was a challenging and, to a certain extent, risky exhibition. The whole museum also understood that. Otherwise, we would not be able to spend so much money to make the exhibition happen. Tokyo National Museum has a really important mission, which is to be a national museum as a treasure house. As a person in charge of regular exhibitions, I make seasonal selections of artworks, objects and cultural properties and display them based on traditional values. As the days passed, I thought it would be all right to also plan some different exhibitions from time to time, be it annually or once every ten years. This was based on what Dr. Yoshida told me was a groundless fear, namely about whether we would be able to continue attracting young people like elementary, junior-high and high school students to our museum and engender in them a curiosity about Japanese cultural heritage. Our special exhibitions are actually free for children up to junior-high-school age. So if they turn up, they can just enter. But they don't come. Even though it is free, they still don't come.

Hundreds thousands of people come to our co-organized exhibitions, and we are one of the busiest museums in Japan. When you include our regular exhibitions, we attract around two million people a year. Around a third of these come from outside Japan. The ratio of visitors to our special exhibitions and regular exhibitions has also stood at around one-to-one recently. Ten years ago, our special exhibitions attracted far more visitors. A few hundreds thousands of people still visited the regular exhibitions, but as a museum we thought about how to advertise and plan the regular exhibitions better. We also held a variety of events, with the result that our regular exhibitions now attract one million people too.

However, Tokyo National Museum still attracts only a fraction of the visitors received by the British Museum, the Forbidden City in Beijing, the National Palace Museum in Taipei, the Louvre, or the Musée d'Orsay. This is despite being situated in a metropolitan area with a population of around 40 million people. To put it another way, only 2 million people out of a total Japanese population of 120 million visit our museum. We need to attract more new visitors. This is not about earning more revenue but rather about fostering an interest among the next generation. I am always thinking about how to present things in order to foster this interest. This is where the idea for the Duchamp exhibition came from. I tried my hardest to ram this point home during internal presentations within the museum.

**Kito:** Does anyone have any questions or comments about this?

**Yoshida:** When I heard about these experiments, I realized there are people who think like me at Tokyo National Museum, perhaps including you, Ms. Kito. I felt a kind of comradeship.

I talked today about 1997's *Images of Other Cultures*, but after this, I saw the emergence of a number of other challenging exhibitions that transcended the boundaries between museums and art galleries.

One of these was an exhibition of the National Museum of Modern Art's collection, held at Tokyo National Museum's Hyokeikan in 1999. I just heard this was partly connected to renovation work at the National Museum of Modern Art, but you wouldn't know this from the outside. It was an extremely groundbreaking exhibition and probably gave courage to many curators across Japan.

Nowadays, we often see museums experimenting by placing archaeological collections alongside works by modern artists. I think we have seen more experiments that transcend the traditional frameworks of museums and art galleries. When Tokyo National Museum does this, it has far more of an impact than other institutions, so I would be delighted to support your efforts. As I listened, I really felt a sense of kindred spirits.

**Kito:** Does anyone have other comments?

**Feltens:** I have a question about TNM's exhibition planning strategy. If TNM has an exhibition that you know is going to draw a substantial amount of visitors, will you pair that exhibition with something that is less popular in order to channel people from the more popular exhibition to the less popular exhibition? I am asking this question because I am doing this right now at the museum. One of the reasons for showing Hokusai is to channel people into Tessai because everybody knows Hokusai, but nobody knows Tessai. So the math is very easy. I'm just wondering if there is any secret to TNM's strategy as well there.

**Kito:** I'll put this question to Mr. Matsushima first.

**Matsushima:** I know of one art museum that had an exhibition of ukiyo-e paintings and woodblock prints . They only had one piece by Utamaro and many pieces by other artists, but they still named the exhibition "Utamaro and Ukiyo-e Artists of His Era."

I think Tokyo National Museum does the opposite. We never employ this kind of strategy. It is more about not wanting to trick our visitors than not wanting to pander to co-organizers.

**Kito:** Mr. Tazawa Hiroyoshi, head of the Curatorial Research Department, is joining us today. Mr. Tazawa, could you talk about the kind of strategies you employ in this area?

**Tazawa:** If we are talking about strategies to entice people to view objects they perhaps would not otherwise look at, we always adopt a positive approach when it comes to exhibiting things we would like to people to see. The Japanese Gallery was made to take visitors on a tour of all aspects of Japanese culture. We simultaneously hold several smaller exhibitions, without trying to guide our visitors to any one final destination.

However, some of the museum's buildings are popular while others are not so much. The Gallery of Horyuji Treasures has many things worth seeing, but not many people visit it. However, if there is something in the gallery that is relevant to other exhibitions, we will try to guide them there. Furthermore, many people think

Tokyo National Museum is a place for Japanese art, so the Asian Gallery has relatively few visitors. If there is some relevant to Japanese art exhibits there, we will prompt people to visit. We adopt a strategy of guiding people there when we exhibit a number of masterpieces or famous works in less popular buildings. Rather than trying to entice people to visit places that usually attract few visitors, I ask our staff to constantly devise seasonal exhibits that everyone can enjoy at any time. Perhaps our curators agree with that and do their job as I request. In this sense, perhaps we are not so strategic.

**Kito:** We talked earlier about communicating with the next generation. Do you have any examples of tools installed in exhibition rooms for younger people to use, for example, or tools that make it easier for young people to take about their own stories? Or do you have any tools that you think could appeal to young people? Recently, we have seen a number of museums installing tablets or touchscreen monitors in their exhibition rooms, for instance.

**Salel:** In Honolulu, we have been thinking about this for the past couple of years. I accompanied a group of donors and trustees from the museum to Japan, and we visited various museums. One of the highlights of the trip was teamLab here in Tokyo, and it seems like people were very impressed by this sort of interactive exhibition. If there's anybody here who's not so familiar with teamLab, they use electronic technology to create digital projections in rooms, and when you touch or move in front of a particular image, then the image will react and become animated and transform. This seems to be becoming quite popular not only here in Japan and is giving a lot of ideas to curators and museum people around the world. Financially speaking, it's a very big investment, I think, and some people have a question about whether that use of technology is something that helps us to appreciate the fine art that we normally have on view, whether this technology is fine art in and of itself, or whether this technology is distracting people or giving them expectations of museums that might not be beneficial for the museum in the future. That being said, if you have a lot to say about a painting, putting that text on an iPad, where people can scroll as long as they want, or where they can see supplemental images that help them to better appreciate the artwork on display—that is a lot more convenient than a regular, printed label on the wall. I can see advantages and disadvantages in that way.

**Trinh:** New technology will play a bigger role in our display and in our exhibitions in the future in any case. It is actually a well-known fact that you need to entice them with something if you want to attract a younger audience. If you just put a painting on the wall, they are not going to look at it. But if there are moving images, they might look at it. This is a fact. We also have to think about how we can wisely use this technology. We are talking about this issue for the next exhibition on narrative arts. There will be many, many long hand scrolls in the show, and there is no way that we can display them in their entirety over a long stretch of time. So we have to think about methods how to display these works so that the audience can experience the entire work, not only one section of it.

Another thing with Japanese art or Asian art in general in the western world, is that there are so many unknown things and unknown objects represented in the artworks that needs a bit more of explanation, and using technology instead of having the labels or the wall texts, which are kind of old-fashioned now, work better. We know no one wants to read long texts. I think what Frank said, 75 words for a caption, is perfect. No one wants to spend time on reading long wall texts anymore. As he says, if you have a caption, they read

the caption and spend one second to look at the artwork. That doesn't work either. Using technology is certainly a big help for us and for our work in the future. It is always on the edge how much we use them and what is the right way to do, and I think to find a balance to use technology is the challenge that we encounter now.

We are thinking now of rearranging our permanent collections and want to include a lot more multimedia. For example, if we have a noh mask and a costume, that's not enough. We would like to show like an excerpt of a noh play so people who have never seen a noh play before know how the masks are used, what it is related to a play – it is not just an object or an art object in a showcase. I think that we need to include more multimedia and more technology in the exhibition, and that is the future of museums.

**Kito:** I would like to ask Andreas Marks of the Minneapolis Institute of Art, to say a few words.

**Marks:** Talking about digital, I have a bit different experience. I am working on a Japanese textile exhibition that is supposed to open in October, and had the idea of using an iPad so that visitors can look up and understand technical terms, like *shibori*. It's the education department that is absolutely opposing to this idea because we have found out that our visitors don't look at digital. So, it's not digital that brings people in; we tend to think that, and it seems like it's a nice idea. But at the end, we are complaining that visitors are spending such a short period of time, looking at the work of art, but are giving them digitals so what does it mean? They are going to look less at the work of art? I personally is against digital. I have iPads in my galleries. I wish I could get rid of them, but in the end, I don't need to get rid of them because anybody never looks at them, so it's okay that can be there.

**Kito:** Today we are also joined by Timothy Clark, who curated the *Shunga* exhibition at the British Museum among other things. Timothy, could you add a few words?

**Clerk:** We started talking about how technology will impinge on our work. I think it's us; we are curators of public collections. Our first and burning duty is to put our collections online. Today, we've been talking about how we mediate our collections to the outside world, which is fine. We'll continue to do that, but we should also give people the opportunity to mediate our collections for themselves. Who are creating the diverse narratives that we are talking about today? We should absolutely make a burning priority to give people the digital tools to do their own curation as well as listen to us.

**Kito:** We have received a lot of questions from the audience, but unfortunately we only have time for one. "The words 'dialogue' and 'conversation' were featured often in today's presentations. Exhibits that will prompt dialogues and conversations will be those that prompt active rather than passive responses from the viewer. I believe there is an unwritten rule in Japanese museums that you must be quiet. When I went to the Manga exhibition at the British Museum, I was surprised to see that visitors could take photos and move around the exhibition freely. I was also struck by how much people seemed to be enjoying themselves. I think the silent Japanese way of appreciating objects must pose challenges to make the visitors enjoy exhibitions in Japan. What does everyone think about this?"

**Matsushima:** Before answering the question, Let me talk a little about digital matters. As the person in charge of planning at the National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties, I actually engage with digital technology. We produce high-resolution reproductions using high-definition video. We then use these

reproductions to make movies and so on. We have used digital technology to create high-resolution images showcasing the *Illustrated Biography of Prince Shotoku*, for example.

Regarding the question of whether this impedes displays, I think the evolution of technology will provide a solution to this problem. Even if a display has no explanations, I think technology will be able to relay this information to people somehow, even without the use of iPads or glasses. Perhaps you don't understand what I am talking about, but I think we will see these technologies soon. On this point, the National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties is pursuing various initiatives aimed at introducing cultural properties and artworks to people in a visual, non-verbal way.

To answer the question about silence and keeping quiet in the galleries, when the National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties ran a program about Hokusai's *Great Wave* last summer, we got the visitors to shout 'Mount Fuji!' We could hear their voices even in the backyard. They were then shown Hokusai's ukiyo-e in the next room. These shouting children also looked at Hokusai's *Great Wave* in the exhibition room, so I think we established some kind of connection.

**Feltens:** I don't believe that a museum should be a reflection of what you encounter on the street, so I do believe that an exhibition space should have a certain kind of solemnity and quietude. But in our museum, we are giving our guards a tour of the exhibition when an exhibition opens. I always tell them not to shush kids when they are in the galleries because that is one thing that makes people afraid of a museum. It creates a temple- or church-like atmosphere that you absolutely do not want from kids growing up. Because if they feel comfortable in a museum they will come back when they are older, so they will continue to come back. That's the noise I want to hear in the gallery, if you even want to call that noise.

**Yoshida:** Maybe this is something unique to ethnology museums, but when we see visitors talking about an exhibit, this is surest sign for us that the exhibit has been a success. I want to create a space where exhibitions prompt people to start conversations with their families or partners. Of course, we never tell people to be quiet.

Moreover, we have four symbolic displays on stages in front of our regular exhibitions. These all ask questions, with the replies written below. The first question is, 'What are these?' This is followed by, 'Do they look the same or do they look different?' We then ask the reverse question, 'Do they look the different or do they look the same?' Finally we ask, 'Are they tools or art?' These questions are all posed to our visitors. These questions represent the way the National Museum of Ethnology or cultural anthropology in general thinks about objects. The first thing we do is foster curiosity in things by asking, 'What is it?' We then ask people to consider cultural differences and similarities. That is the reason behind the question, 'Do they look the same or do they look different?' Finally, we get people to relativize their own way of looking at things. That is why we place a Mackintosh chair next to a chair made by Africa's Robi people, for example.

We ask questions about all the objects in this way, so by the time visitors enter the exhibition rooms, they have already begun a conversation that will continue as they walk through the rooms. I think ethnology museums in particular should take this kind of approach.

As for the question about digital technology, I would like to engage in a bit of publicity. I highly qualify the teamLab's works. They do a lot of groundbreaking work. They transcend the boundaries between a watcher and watched, between onlookers and artworks. They transcend the frames of a picture, with the pictures actually set in motion. They also transcend the framework of the exhibition room. They have the same characters walking through the exhibition rooms with you, for example. I admire their work very much.

We organized an exhibition of teamLab at the Himeji City Museum of Art recently. This was my first time to organize an exhibition at a venue other than my own museum then asked to contribute to a book about teamLab, accompanying the exhibition. Later, I received an amazing letter from their representative director Inoko Toshiyuki, in which he wrote "I'm glad I am alive." This was the first time for me to receive a letter of thanks like this, but from the very beginning I recognized the fantastic, transcendent nature of teamLab's work.

I don't think every museum should introduce this kind of technology. I think this is an activity that focuses on the visual aspect of artworks to dispel the various conventions contained within our way of seeing things. Museums have placed too much emphasis on visual aspects, though, with touch and other senses relegated to second place. The National Museum of Ethnology has a 'Let's Try Touching!' corner at the end of our exhibition rooms. This autumn, we are going to hold a special exhibition called 'The Universal Museum.' The exhibition's executive committee is chaired by our researcher Hirose Kojiro, who is visually impaired. The exhibition has already roused the interest of several modern sculptors, and I imagine they will be vying with each other to see who can create the best exhibit. I imagine sculptors want people to touch their works, but museums forbid this. People will be able to touch the displays at this exhibition, with a number of sculptors already agreeing to participate. This is also a challenging project, but I think there are many ways to adopt challenging approaches.

On March 3, the National Museum of Ethnology will introduce a totally new system of display guides and video talks that visitors will be able to use by downloading an application to their smartphones. When they point their cameras at an exhibit, an AR (Augmented Reality) explanation will activate. Incidentally, when we first discussed this, some people worried it would distract from the actual exhibits. To get around this, we have made sure the application also leads people to look at the actual exhibit through comments like 'please look at the object.' Also, if they turn away from the display, the program finishes automatically. In this way, visitors cannot use their smartphones while doing other things. They have to stop and point their camera at a display before the explanation begins. These explanations are stored on our system, so visitors can also go the videotheque booths located around the museum to select videos of exhibits they have seen from a list that automatically appears. Furthermore, we have also introduced a program that will let people check information on their smartphones or PCs after they have returned home. This is all recorded, so when they next visit the museum, they will be presented with choices of other exhibits they may not have seen yet. Please visit if you get the chance.

Kito: Thank you for your comments. I feel we could talk for a lot longer, but I am afraid we will have to wrap up the panel discussion here. We will hold a gathering after the discussion, so please feel free to join and talk directly with all our panelists today.

I believe our talk today has taught us about the diversity of Japanese art, about the ways each museum responds to various social demands, and about how curators work hard to create their own narratives for a wide range of visitors. We have talked various matters about today's theme, 'Creating Diverse Narratives: The Arts of Japan in Museum Exhibitions.' I hope museum exhibitions of Japanese art will enrich everyone's lives a little. Thank you very much.