



CULCON Arts Dialogue Committee Report to CULCON XXV

I. Background:

Among six task forces established at CULCON XXIII in 2008 to identify issues for potential action, the Arts and Cultural Exchange Task Force examined topics of mutual concern including:

- Assessing the impact of exchanges of curators;
- Mobilizing networks of curators and presenters;
- Organizing symposia on Performing and Visual Arts.

Based on the task force's activities and potential for positive impact in the field, CULCON announced in the CULCON XXIV Joint Statement that it would establish a "working group of specialists to consider future measures to enhance exchange in the fields of traditional, modern and contemporary art and to establish a framework for mutually beneficial curatorial collaboration and exchange."

Later named the Arts Dialogue Committee, the group has had two lively and substantive binational meetings since the last plenary session, once in Washington, DC in May, 2011 and once in Tokyo in March, 2012.

II. Accomplishments:

The Arts Dialogue Committee is a forum that has allowed representatives from U.S. and Japanese private and public institutions to air differing points of view and to reach greater understanding on important issues, such as indemnification, needs and methods of fundraising and effective means for the promotion of contemporary art.

As a direct result of the Arts Dialogue Committee meetings, the International Workshop on Japanese Art History for Graduate Students (JAWS) program was re-established after a hiatus of six years. Funded by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, JAWS is a workshop organized by graduate students of art history from the U.S. and Japan. The tenth session will be held at Tokyo University of the Arts from August 16th-26, 2012. One of the longer-term impacts of JAWS is the successful creation of an international network of emerging scholars.

Also as a direct result of the discussions, the Agency for Cultural Affairs has funded a curatorial internship with the candidate to be selected from among past participants in the JAWS workshops.

III. Recommendations:

The Arts Dialogue Committee agenda has been wide in scope but the group has delved deeply into various issues in search of resolutions to differences. As a result of the research and discussions among its members, the group recommends the following:

A. Exchange and Professional Development:

- JAWS: make the selection process of participants and host schools more transparent and inclusive; consider organizing JAWS by region;
- Encourage exchange of curators and other museum personnel including administrators and conservators;
- Nurture and expand the number of researchers on Japanese art;
- Encourage existing programs to institutionalize a Japan component. For example, the Philadelphia Museum of Arts could try to ensure that at least one Japanese student each summer is among its undergraduate/graduate summer interns;
- Place special emphasis on two-way curatorial exchanges that might result in joint exhibitions;

B. Exhibitions:

- Further encourage the introduction of American art to Japan;
- Include regional museums in exchanges and joint exhibitions;
- Encourage the further examination and revision of the new Japanese indemnification laws, which are posing barriers to exchange of cultural properties;
- Encourage interdepartmental participation in exchanges. For example, contemporary and traditional art specialists in one museum should participate together because they collaborate in their own institutions;
- As a result of March 11, many U.S. museums have cancelled their plans to lend art to Fukushima museums. Encourage American institutions to honor their commitments and to make plans to share their collections.
- There are cultural properties that were damaged during the earthquake and tsunami that have been conserved and are available for exhibition abroad. Encourage American institutions to exhibit these pieces as well as feature information about rescue and conserving processes and activities.

C. Information Sharing:

- Create a bilingual database of past exchanges as background for future exchanges;
- Create a bilingual forum for information sharing among institutions to enhance networking and avoid duplication. For example, use the annual meeting of Curators for Asian Art as a model;

- Encourage bilingual publication of results of surveys of Japanese art in the US in electronic form so that they are available to a wider audience
- Using March 11 as a benchmark, encourage institutions to examine and share information about the efficacy of anti-seismic technology already in used.

IV. Conclusions

In the short time it has been in existence, the Arts Dialogue Committee has made tangible contributions to the field in encouraging and improving art and museum exchange between the two countries. In addition to these contributions, the Committee offers a unique binational forum to facilitate conversations on issues that arise in the community, for instance indemnity and CITES. The group should continue to meet over the next two years with a focus on tangible results in specific areas and programs.

Following CULCON's valuable role as incubator of collaboration, the Committee should explore other organizations with which to partner in continuing and expanding the important work it has begun.