A Journey Through Asian Art

Broadcast on ABC TV 3 from October 10, 2014 at 11:20am

Development of this series has been funded by Film Victoria and Seoul Film Commission. Financial support from Asia Education Foundation. Support was also provided by Japan Film Commission.
**Series Outline**
Contemporary Asian art is new and exciting.

Art historian, Alison Carroll, shows how Asian art came out of a century scarred by national independence struggles and bolstered by emerging economies. It came from an Asia where new ideas clashed with traditional ways.

Join Alison as she travels the world, talking with artists in their studios and visiting museums. We go behind the scenes exploring storerooms and vaults, seeing key works from the 20th century that shaped Asian art.

The vibrant art from Asia amazes us. It is now time to understand it.

**Series Website**
The series website is currently being developed and is at: http://ajourneythroughasianart.com/

**Format**
10 x 10 minute episodes.

**Key Creatives**
Alison Carroll – presenter. Her website is: http://www.alisoncarroll.net/

Catherine Gough-Brady – director/producer. Her website is: www.catherinégough-brady.com
Series Episode Outlines for the 10x10min

**Episode 1 Unseen Worlds**

Alison Carroll is in Brisbane, outside the Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art. She is heading towards an exhibition by Cai Guo-qiang. Cai grew up in China, and he is a child of the Cultural Revolution. Carroll talks with Cai about how his artistic ideas came from Maoism, but also from much older, traditional, methods.

In Seoul, Korea, Carroll talks with curator Kim Hong-hee about how art from Asia is leading the way in the international scene in the 21st century, and how it absorbs ideas from the East and the West. To understand more about contemporary art scene Carroll says we need to step back into the 20th century, and beyond, and understand that different cultures look at the world differently.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Cai Guo-Qiang – China/USA
Kim Hong Hee – South Korea

**Link to view episode:**
http://youtu.be/9adR9j7fsiY

**Episode 2 New Ideas**

Part of Confucian teaching on an ordered world is respect for your elders, both in age and position, respect for the order of the group. At the turn of the 20th century young artists were challenging this way of organising society. To do this they promoted the rights of the lowest member of Confucian society, the girl. Liu Haisu’s *Girl in a fox fur* shocked audiences by depicting a confident modern young woman.

Across the sea in Japan, artists were also challenging tradition. Yorozu in his *Nude Beauty*, embraced individualism.

Alison Carroll visits Amanda Heng in her Singaporean studio and talks with her about how she uses ‘touch’ between women in her family to challenge the patriarchal aspects of Confucian tradition.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Amanda Heng – Singapore

**Link to view episode:**
http://youtu.be/fxeY3Y-EsXU
**Episode 3 East and West**

We all know Gauguin travelled to the South Seas, but what is less well know is that it was seeing images of the temple at Borobudur that inspired him to leave France. The sway of the human form in the Indonesian temple carvings can be clearly seen in his woodcuts.

Down the road from Borobudur lives the contemporary artist Lucia Hartini. An artist whose work is inspired partly by European Surrealism.

Alison Carroll questions conventional art-history view that a European artist inspired by other cultures is a genius, and an Asian artist who is inspired by other cultures is a copyist. Both artists have incorporated other cultures in their work. Both create unique art.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Lucia Hartini – Indonesia

**Link to view episode:**
http://youtu.be/IO_EMF8BZKc

**Episode 4 Trade Winds**

In the 1940s in Manila a debate raged in the daily press about Modern art. Victorio Edades wanted to find a way “to blend and integrate all our impressions with our Oriental heritage and traditional Christian culture”. The Spanish had been in The Philippines for so long that Catholicism was a tradition for them.

Edades and his fellow artists also turned to pre-Hispanic imagery, inspired by the work of the Mexican muralists, particularly by the works of Diego Rivera. The sea trade routes to Philippines (and on China) went via South America, and ideas flowed with them.

Alison Carroll talks with Filipino artist Nune Alvarado about the relationship between politics and the Catholic imagery in his artwork.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Nune Alvarado – Philippines

**Link to view episode:**
http://youtu.be/6CJ1bwteOf8
**Episode 5 Red Ink**

In 1930s Shanghai the writer Lu Xun asked artists to create woodblock prints that showed the hardship of life. Woodblocks had been developed in China centuries before, but it was the more recent work of Kathe Kollwitz that inspired the return to the form.

After the revolution, Mao could see the value of mass-producing prints as propaganda. Alison Carroll explains that the prints even helped to Chinese people to become literate.

After the Cultural Revolution the prints become bigger and simplified. The strong graphic political style which developed was influential around the world, particularly in the 1970s, and Carroll visits Australian printmaker Ann Newmarch to discuss how this Chinese art practice spread into Australasia and influenced Newmarch’s work.

By the end of the twentieth century the graphic style of the prints had evolved into ironic canvas works that critiqued the regime, but were no longer created for mass consumption.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Ann Newmarch – Australia

**Link to view episode:**
http://youtu.be/aa-8o5LUX2c

**Episode 6 Independence**

The mid twentieth century in Indonesia, like many of its neighbours, was a time when the people struggled against colonial power. Art became a tool in the drive for independence from the West.

Alison Carroll talks about Hendra Gunawan’s *Hello Hello Bandung*, which was painted as the Japanese left and the Dutch tried to resume their colonial control of Indonesia. Gunawan uses the angular form of the wayang puppets when depicting the soldiers.

Vietnamese artists were also looking to traditional techniques and merging them with modern ideas. To Ngoc Van’s *Lighting a torch to go to night class*, was painted just before he died in the battle of Dien Bien Phu against the French.

In the Philippines, Alison Carroll talks with Brenda Fajardo about how she combined depictions of people throughout the independence struggles with mystic symbols of the tarot cards to make a political statement.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Brenda Fajardo – Philippines
Communist Chinese art was heavily influenced by Russian painting. The Chinese adopted the European idea of history painting, a painting that seemingly depicts an historical event, but in fact is designed to display the power of the regime.

Alison Carroll investigates the Dong Xiwen painting, Mao declaring the Communist People’s Republic from Tiananmen Square, a history painting of in which key characters were painted in and out depending upon whether they were in favour.

Alison Carroll talks to Shen Jiawei a key artist working for the Cultural Revolution. He tells the story of a painting he created and how it too was painted over to better suit the communist agenda.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Shen Jiawei – China/Australia

In Japanese culture the space between objects is as important as the objects themselves. Tan Boon Hui explains that, for East Asian artists, space is not left over, it is created.

Alison visits the house of Lee U-fan, leader of the Mono-ha movement in the 1960s in Japan. Lee U-fan talks about he aims of the Mono-ha artists. They used raw materials and tried to ‘not make’ the art, by allowing the materials to express themselves.

He shows Alison some of his sculptural works in his garden.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Lee U-fan – Japan
Tan Boon Hui - Singapore
**Episode 9 The Way Between**

The destruction, and military failure in WWII created space for young Japanese artists to critic the status quo.

We visit the vaults of a museum in Tokyo where a key work in the new style hangs. Instead of just painting the canvas, artists began to explore ways of incorporating their gesture and movement into the work. The gesture became more important than the artwork itself. It became the artwork, leading to a rise of performance art. Examples include Ono’s *Cut Piece* and Tanaka’s *Electric Dress*.

The boundaries between visual arts and performance blurred, culminating in the work of Hijikata and his creation of Butoh.

Alison Carroll talks with Yumi Umiumare, a Butoh practitioner about the ideas behind this form of dance.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Yumi Umiumare – Japan/Australia

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**Episode 10 New Harmony**

By the end of the 20th century Asia had started to become a significant economic and technological modern power. A tension developed between tradition and modernity, between high art and low art, between what might be seen as art which aspires to improve us and art which is just having fun.

Alison visits Choi Jeong-hwa’s house, where he shows her a number of his artworks and explains how he combines traditional colour with contemporary materials. His most famous works being his large plastic flowers.

Another artist, Kimsooja, is also inspired by traditional use of fabric, and she creates installations and video works using the old materials.

Finally, Alison wraps up the series, and reminds us that we can now look at artworks from Asia with a better understanding of what the artist is saying.

**Interviews in this episode:**
Choi Jeong-hwa – South Korea