

Writing identity onto the screen

Claire Maree

QUESTION MARKS appearing above a character's head, text that sparkles and shines, creative subtitling to show the inner voice of a character; the use of text in audiovisual media continues to diversify. An emerging body of cross-disciplinary work examines phenomena such as impact-captions, *telop*, decotitles, fansubs and synchronous commentary; all examples of text-on-screen produced in both professional and amateur contexts at local and transnational levels. Text-on-screen shapes how viewers understand, negotiate and engage with media. As research on impact-captions in Japanese and Korean television has argued, text in audiovisual media commodifies the gaze¹ and is a "locus for the regimentation of languages and discourses".² Text-on-screen, therefore, is a major site where identity is written into contemporary culture.

Contemporary Japanese media is an important case study for understanding global and local flows of language and identities because of its influential position in regional markets. Furthermore, although the use of decotitles and other creative subtitling is only recently being noted in English language

commercial television, the use of text-on-screen has long been a feature of Japanese TV. The history of text-on-screen in Japan is heavily tied to both commercial design and technological innovation. In recent years, digital technologies have enabled a greater variety of fonts to be introduced to the small-screen, and with the introduction of twitter-feeds and digital monitors, the sheer volume of text continues to increase.

Other Melbourne-based scholars with a research focus on screen culture in East Asia include Fran Martin, Audrey Yue and Tessa Dwyer. My own research into the movement of television talk into text on Japanese television involves thinking about how identities constituted in spoken discourse are simultaneously inscribed graphically. Furthermore, understanding titles and subtitling as one example of citational practices in contemporary media enables us to examine how discourse is recontextualised and mitigated in mainstream representations.³ This has implications for how social issues are framed within public discourse.

In November 2016, as part of my ongoing project "Writing identity on the screen: Subtitles and captions in Japanese media" [ARC Discovery Project 150102964], researchers engaged in language and global media, with a focus on audiovisual and emerging multimodal digital produced for mass-consumptions (e.g., television programs), gathered in Melbourne for an international workshop on Language and Global Media. The workshop aimed to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborative work that

examines transnational movements of global media. Looking at how text is used in audiovisual media from this perspective leads us to critically engage with identity and language in the context of wider questions on consumption and translation of media from, into and about the Asia region.

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The study of Asian art in Australia

Michelle Antoinette

STUDIES OF CONTEMPORARY ASIAN ART have flourished in Australia over the last few decades alongside the burgeoning contemporary art scene in Asia and growing global interest in contemporary Asian art. I first came to learn about contemporary Asian art in the early 1990s, a time of dynamic cultural relations between Asia and Australia, including the growth of new art partnerships, collaborations, and exchanges – especially through the 'Artists' Regional Exchange' (ARX, formerly Australia and Regions Exchange, 1987-99) exhibitions, the Arts Program at 'Asialink' founded by Alison Carroll focusing on art exhibition exchanges and artist residencies in Asia, the arts organisation 'Multimedia Art Asia-Pacific' (MAAP) (now Media Art Asia-Pacific) led by Kim Machan exploring media art in Asia, and the Queensland Art Gallery's (QAG) ground-breaking 'Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art' (APT) exhibition series beginning in 1993.

Indeed, Asian art scholarship in Australia has prospered in tandem with the development of Australia-based art exhibitions and collections of Asian art. The first three editions of the APT exhibition included major conferences, which were highly influential in shaping longer-term networks, dialogues and debates for the field. The pioneering contemporary Asian art journal then known as *Art and Asia Pacific* was also established in 1993 in Australia and helped stimulate a scholarly presence for the field internationally. Likewise, leading scholars of Asian art came from all corners of the world to gather at the Australian National University in Canberra in 1991 for the momentous conference 'Modernism and Post-Modernism in Asian Art' – convened by eminent historian of Asian art, Professor John Clark – to discuss the differently situated and long-neglected modern and contemporary art histories of Asia.

These were key platforms and conferences that provided an early and developing critical mass of knowledge shaping both Australian and broader international perceptions of the modern and contemporary art of the region. Some of the influential work undertaken in Australia includes the research and teachings of Professor John Clark who has highlighted the distinctive histories of Modern Asian Art and established pioneering courses in Asian art history at the University of Sydney. Dr Caroline Turner – former QAG Deputy Director and foundational Curator of their APT exhibitions – has provided leadership in contemporary Asian art research at the Australian National University (ANU). Dr Turner has given visibility to Asian art through major exhibitions, conferences and publications particularly on themes of politics, ethics and human rights.

Other leading research in Australia includes that by Professor Adrian Vickers, based at the University of Sydney, who researches and publishes on the cultural history of Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia. He has been researching modern and contemporary Indonesian art, especially the history of Balinese painting. Also tracking developments in contemporary Indonesian art, and particularly new media art and art collectives, is Dr Edwin Jurriëns based at the University of Melbourne's Asia Institute where he teaches Indonesian Studies. At the ANU, Professor Ken George has developed a unique long-term research collaboration with renowned modern Indonesian artist A.D. Pirous, investigating the artist's life and work from an ethnographic perspective; and Professor Virginia Matheson



Above: publicity advert for OzAsia Festival 2015.

Hooker has pursued important studies exploring Islamic influences in contemporary Indonesian and Malaysian art.

The field of contemporary Southeast Asian art is a strong area of interest in Australia, likely reflective of Australia's proximity to the region. As I argue in my book *Reworlding Art History: Encounters with Contemporary Southeast Asian Art after 1990* (Brill/Rodopi, 2014), far from being peripheral, Southeast Asian art has helped create the very conditions of international contemporary art, compelling us to examine the Euro-American biases of art history. Contemporary Southeast Asian art and artists play a significant part in shaping current global debates regarding the meaning of contemporary art in the world. They also reveal the locally-specific, socio-historical and aesthetic contexts informing contemporary Southeast Asian art, which also imbue it with its own histories of development, different to Western art.

'Ambitious Alignments: New Histories of Modern Southeast Asian Art' is an exciting modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art project initiated in 2014 and supported by the Getty Foundation in conjunction with the University of Sydney, supporting a new generation of Southeast Asia-based research by scholars in Asia and Australia. At the ANU, a celebration of Australia-Southeast Asia connections was marked by the 2015 conference and exhibition 'Making Connections: Southeast Asian Art @ ANU'.

With regards to East Asia, Dr Claire Roberts is a well-known historian and curator of Chinese art, currently pursuing an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship project at the University of Melbourne, exploring modern and contemporary Chinese art to think about the challenges of intercultural communication in the twenty-first century. For his recent research with the Australian Centre on China in the World at ANU, Dr Olivier Krischer explored Japan-China relations as a facet of contemporary Asian art developments in the 1980s-1990s; whilst contemporary art curator Dr Sophie McIntyre investigated nationalism and identity in Taiwanese modern and contemporary art for her 2012 PhD thesis at ANU.

The field of 'Asian-Australian art' refers to artists of Asian heritage living in Australia and acknowledges their distinctive contributions to both Asian and Australian art histories and

their intersection. Leading work in the area has been undertaken by the Asian-Australian Research Studies Network and cultural spaces such as 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in Sydney, which internationally-renowned Asian art curator Melissa Chiu helped to establish twenty years ago. Formative work in this area includes that by Professor Jacqueline Lo, Professor Ien Ang, Dr Dean Chan, and Dr Francis Maravillas. Dialogues with North American neighbours with parallel interests in Asian-American art have widened the platform for critical engagement in this field, as evidenced in collaborations around the journal *Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas*.

The ANU in Canberra, where I have pursued Asian art research and teaching in the field over the last fifteen years, is another locus for studies of modern and contemporary Asian art. Major conferences include the recent inaugural conference of the Australian Consortium for Asian Art, 'Moving Image Cultures in Asian Art'. Teaching in the area of Asian art at the ANU includes that undertaken in the School of Art by Dr Chaitanya Sambrani (on the modern and contemporary art of India, Indonesia and Japan), and Dr Charlotte Galloway (on Asian Art history with a focus on Myanmar), both located at the Centre for Art History and Art Theory. My own research at the ANU includes the recent Australia Research Council (ARC) project 'The Rise of New Cultural Networks in Asia in the Twenty-First Century' (DP1096041, 2010-13), which I carried out with Dr Caroline Turner. We examined Asian cultural organisations and their new regional and global networking strategies, focusing on contemporary art and art museums as key indicators of cultural change.

Alongside scholarship, art collections and exhibitions of contemporary Asian art in Australia have also strengthened in this time and increased the opportunities for the development of scholarship. This includes the Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art with its APT series and specialist Asian Art research library; the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), National Gallery of Australia and National Museum of Australia in Canberra, which have all held important contemporary Asian art exhibitions such as the NPG's 'Beyond the Self: Contemporary Portraiture from Asia' (2011), curated by Christine Clark; and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Museum of Contemporary Art, Gallery 4A, Sherman Foundation Galleries, and the China-focused White Rabbit Gallery, are among some of the key galleries in Sydney with interest in Asian art. The Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, and the Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia have all been host to key exhibitions. Similarly, the Adelaide-based OzAsia Festival, Adelaide Biennale, the new Asia TOPA performing arts festival in Melbourne, and the Sydney Biennale are other important platforms. The effects of exhibitions are highlighted in essays for *Art in the Asia-Pacific: Intimate Publics* (Routledge, 2014), many by Australia-based researchers.

I'm very excited to be embarking on a new ARC-funded research project (DE170100455) from 2017, exploring new public participation in Asian art and museums in Asia, to be hosted by the Centre for Art History & Art Theory at the ANU School of Art. It's certainly a very exciting time to be continuing my research in the region, witnessing firsthand the incredible dynamism in the art and museum sectors and the latest developments newly shaping the field of contemporary Asian art.

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