

Foreword by Caroline Turner

Mapping the Future

Art changed dramatically in the late twentieth century with the emergence of new technologies and new media and at the same time globalisation and geopolitical change led to a shift of gravity from an art centred in Europe and America and towards regions such as Asia, transforming our world in the twenty-first century.

MAAP - Media Art Asia Pacific has specialised in 'mapping' contemporary media art in Australia and the Asian and Pacific region since 1998, the first organisation in the world to do so and, in the process, created an extraordinary artistic network with cross-cultural projects and partners in many countries. Working with over 500 artists as well as numerous institutions, MAAP has become one of Australia's most important art connectors to the Asia-Pacific.

I became aware of MAAP when we collaborated on the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial in 1999. I was Project Director for the APT at that time and had approached MAAP's Director Kim Machan because I believed we needed to include new media art in an exhibition with the theme 'Beyond the Future'. The highly successful 'Virtual Triennial' revealed new media as a dynamic new source of art and communication. The on-line exhibition was one of the first art museum exhibitions of its kind. As Bronwyn Mahoney has said this helped create new spaces for art: http://www.mppb.eu/choreographing_chaos.php

What characterised that collaboration was what MAAP does superbly throughout its projects in the region: genuine partnership based on mutual respect, in-depth research, support for artists and experimental practice, critical and scholarly publications, exciting art that allows a fluid dialogue to emerge from audience engagement and a dedication to audiences. Cross-cultural dialogue is not easy. While new media techniques may be understood across countries, especially among those with high tech backgrounds and training, there are aspects of culture that require translation in local situations. I very much admire the way that MAAP has engaged with very broadly based audiences. The use of libraries as a venue for the brilliant bilingual *Light from Light* project in China and Australia reflects a depth of commitment to public art. The Shanghai Library, one of the venues and which receives over 2 million visitors a year, states on its website that the library '... styles itself in the shape of pyramids with escalating cubic blocks, which symbolizes the solid foundation of cultural heritage and the endless efforts by [the] human being in pursuit of knowledge'. Libraries are

focussed on communities and knowledge sharing. The embedding of light-inspired and light-generating art in library spaces is a fascinating idea, combining as it does the concept that libraries are sources of enlightenment with the power of art to touch and inspire the individual imagination and to create cross-cultural dialogue.

Dr Caroline Turner is a Senior Research Fellow in the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, Australian National University and previously was Deputy Director of the Queensland Art Gallery and a co-founder of the APT.