

2007

Immersion in the traditional and fine arts of Asia, more particularly Japan, for nearly 30 years together with my partner Robert Joyce, has honed my eye – a long apprenticeship from which I am confidently emerging comfortable in my own ability to work with both Australian and Asian artists to curate exhibitions, other than our own, that reflect the new absorption and assimilation of contemporary art of the Asia Pacific region.

In this sense Kazari Collector is a new gallery and *widening the vision* is a transition that Robert and I are currently making with Kazari and renovating the cream brick 60's *photo lab* building at 450 Malvern Rd for the new Kazari Collector was been a necessary step to the re-visioning process.

We will continue to import and deal in Japanese fine art from Momoyama screens to C20th paintings, Buddhist, decorative art, folk art and textiles – reflecting Roberts' life work and where he has developed a degree of connoisseurship. Over the last decade, our interest has widened to include contemporary art and sculpture by selected Australian artists whose works express reference or complement our developed aesthetic sensibility or play with or elucidate contemporary themes that are of interest or concern aesthetic integration in the region.

We have always exhibited our finds; placement and juxtaposition of like and un-like, playing with asymmetry, creating harmony from discord in arrangement and display, are concerns that have kept us both visually *awake* and physically fit – defining and refining an aesthetic edge – always needing fresh material with which to sharpen the vision.

The definition of the Japanese word *kazari*\*, so well expressed in English recently by the British Museum, essentially means *simplicity* and *elegance* but a full reading of the definition will allow a more expansive understanding of what we are about. The sense and meaning of the name Kazari, also allows us to explore art that is outside the usual parameters that Australian contemporary art galleries set. The challenge is to avoid the inevitable pitfalls that this might present.

The aesthetic concept of *wabi*, *sabi* and *suki* \* which grew out of Zen Buddhism and tea ceremony, we often use as a *measure* to focus when considering what we choose to show. But we are not limited by this; rather we are grounded and lubricated by it.

The challenge is to stay fresh and remain relevant despite changing fads and fashion. Ashika' sculpture, for instance, is timeless in this sense; we first invited him to Australia and later facilitated his sponsorship. Now he is a regular at the McClelland Sculpture Survey and this year he was included in the Helen Lempriere Sculpture Award.

John Bartlett's' work with hexagrams from the I Ching, known as the book of changes or book of wisdom — though often thought to be a Confucian oracle and seemingly removed from the philosophy of Zen and the aesthetic concept of *wabi, sabi and suki*, the I Ching has its origins in a much older archaic source – in a form which John, through his own alchemy; art and meditation has accessed himself and expressed. Through his paint preparation process and methodology – pigment, caustic, beeswax applied to aluminium - John has mastered the central theme of the I Ching – where lines transform and change; the continuous change and transformation that underlies all existence.

John is both an artist and a meditator with a studio at the Organ factory in Clifton Hill – a series of studios where friend and fellow meditator Paul Boston also work and he regularly 'sits' in Za-zen in the meditation *do-jo* they have on site, but says his mediation is deepest when he paints.

While at Kazari we are drawn to work that reflects spirituality, a sense of beauty that harmonises with nature, with artists whose output that feels like it has oozed out of the artist's core as pure creativity. However, selection doesn't exclude appreciation of accomplishment of skills and in new explorations of older forms as evidenced with our recent exhibition, *Rat Daughter, Chocolate Geisha* with young artists, Andrea Innocent and her '*new media*' digital prints and Sydney based Benedict Ernst with images from *the floating world*, both of which reference Japanese culture but also present an Australian perspective.

Artists such as Lou Xiang and Zhou Xiaoping – whose early training in Chinese ink brush painting in their native China underpin their work which has taken them on very different journeys; one to Aboriginal Australia and the other to paint delightfully gentle whimsical paintings, but the roots of both artists are clearly Asian Pacific and not European.

While Matisse and Picasso were inspired by African forms, Monet was fascinated and influenced by Japanese woodblock prints. The concept of *Kazari* \* gives us permission to widen the vision - we show African art too and see the links between it all.

The idea is to keep pace with the developing sense of Austral - Asia as it keeps delighting and surprising us, as new artists and works turn up and opportunities for curating ever more tantalising exhibitions feed the desire to create more shows.

Jo Maindonald  
Director  
Kazari Pty Ltd.

\* See definitions: Kazari British Museum *wabi, sabi and suki*