



THE ASIA PACIFIC COUNCIL LOOKING BACK ON APT9

As the Gallery's flagship contemporary art series, the Asia Pacific Triennial has been instrumental in building strong relationships and developing an unrivalled collection of art from across the region. **Tonya Turner** spoke with three members of QAGOMA's Asia Pacific Council about their memorable moments from APT9 and the impact of this ambitious and internationally acclaimed event.

The artworks have come down and the installations stored away, but the insights and lessons offered by the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art are fresh in the hearts and minds of visitors. APT9 has been one of the most successful APTs to date, attracting well over half a million visitors, including almost 30 000 for the opening weekend and a record-breaking crowd for the popular Up Late event. The exhibition, featuring 400 contemporary artworks by more than 80 individual artists and collectives, wrapped up in April, closing the

doors on another successful Triennial.

Rachel Crowley, Executive General Manager of Communications and Public Affairs for the Brisbane Airport Corporation, could have spent hours looking at Iman Raad's *Days of bliss and woe* 2018. 'There was so much going on and I struggled to still my eyes. I just wanted to spend more and more time looking carefully and progressively through it', she says. Bringing together Western Arrernte artist Vincent Namatjira's three series — 'Prime Ministers' 2016, 'Seven Leaders' 2016 and

'The Richest' 2016 — was another highlight. 'The portraits were so wonderful to look at, and playful, but the message they sent clearly was anything but.'

Brisbane Airport Corporation is a longstanding member of the Asia Pacific Council and supporter of QAGOMA. Under the umbrella of the Gallery's Business Leaders Network, the Asia Pacific Council is an incubator for organisations who conduct business across Australia, Asia and the Pacific to share knowledge and cultural engagement

Opposite QAGOMA Director Chris Saines gives a private tour of APT9 for members of the Asia Pacific Council, March 2019 / Photograph: Joe Ruckli

Below Professor Caitlin Byrne (right), Director of the Griffith Asia Institute, at a Perspectives: Asia lecture at GOMA, February 2019 / Photograph: Joe Ruckli

Below Right Brisbane Airport Corporation's Rachel Crowley with Qiu Zhijie's mural *Map of Technological Ethics* 2018 at APT9, March 2019 / Photograph: Joe Ruckli



about the region. While the Council's primary function is to support the Triennial, members are also invited to participate in a range of networking and cultural events, including roundtable discussions for CEOs.

'The Asia Pacific is the growth region for our future, and the arts is such a brilliant vehicle to explore opportunities to find new partners and new allies in business in the region', Crowley says. 'We support the arts in Queensland, not just because we love it, but because it's intrinsic to our business. People travel to experience not just great beaches and natural attractions, but also for the arts and culture. The stronger our arts and cultural offering in Brisbane and Queensland, the stronger our travel industry. We're also locals ourselves, and places like QAGOMA make this a great city to live in.'

While APT9 offered plenty to discover, for Professor Caitlin Byrne, Director of the Griffith Asia Institute, nothing beat sharing in its treasures with a crowd of avid art lovers on opening night. 'GOMA was abuzz and



aglow with activity, conversation and colour. The atmosphere was electric. The artworks themselves came alive, and there was a genuine sense of interaction and engagement by the audience with each of the pieces in the collection', she says.

The most memorable works for Byrne included *Loloi* 2018, by the Gunantuna (Tolai people) of Papua New Guinea, Vuth Lyno's *House – Spirit* 2018 and Qiu Zhijie's mural, *Map of Technological Ethics* 2018. She particularly valued the Perspectives: Asia public seminar series, when Griffith Asia Institute and QAGOMA joined forces with *Australian Foreign Affairs* to explore Australia and China's cultural engagement. 'APT is a stand-out event in Australia's cultural landscape', Byrne says. 'The Asia Pacific Council provides a unique opportunity to support and promote conversations of significance about the role of culture as a vehicle for Australia's closer engagement within the region. We are proud to support the Council and to be a part of the collective effort to ensure continued recognition of and support for the APT.'

The highlight for Penny Burt, Group CEO of Asialink, was the strong representation of First Nations and indigenous peoples at APT9. 'I was so struck by the whole indigenous voice through the exhibition, and particularly Jonathon Jones's *untitled (giran)* 2018, which was so moving and really engaged the senses

in so many ways', she says. Sawangwongse Yawngwong's *The Myanmar Peace Industrial Complex, Map III* 2018 also made a lasting impression. 'In this provocative piece of work, he captured and offered an amazing window on the complexity of Myanmar politics, history, culture and the role of the military.'

Asialink and QAGOMA share the mission of driving Australia's engagement with Asia through the arts and culture to develop deep and enduring relationships. 'APT has opened this vista on Asia for a broad audience and brought to the fore all the complexity of the region through exhibiting these era-defining artists', Burt says. 'The idea that the Gallery has committed through APT to building this enduring set of linkages through its own collection I find inspiring for the long term. That shows real vision and commitment.'

Tonya Turner is a freelance journalist. She spoke with Rachel Crowley, Caitlin Byrne and Penny Burt in March 2019.

Members of the QAGOMA Asia Pacific Council contribute an annual sum that supports the Gallery's innovative arts programming. In return, members receive exclusive access to private after-hours and behind-the-scenes events, curator-led tours, talks, activities, tickets and free venue access in a unique networking format. For further details on this program or exhibition sponsorship opportunities, contact the Gallery's Head of Business Development and Partnerships, Kylie Lonergan, on (07) 3840 7641 or email kylie.lonergan@qagoma.qld.gov.au