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MMCA SYMPOSIUM What Do Museums Collect?

30 Nov 2018 – 1 Dec 2018 MMCA Seoul

The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, presents the international symposium "What Do Museums Collect?" from Friday, November 30 to Saturday, December 1 in the Multi-project Hall of MMCA Seoul.

This symposium is the **second academic event held as part of the MMCA's museum research project** launched as an effort to reinforce the museums' investigative capacities as well as to invigorate debates and dialogues on contemporary art. Experts from worldrenowned art institutions such as the Guggenheim Museum, Centre Pompidou, and the Getty Research Institute will participate in the event to hold extensive discussions on one of the major issues of contemporary art: the meaning and purpose of collecting and its methodologies and policies. Last April, the museum research project has explored the practicality of curating through the symposium "What Do Museums Research?" Over the course of two days from Friday, November 30 to Saturday, December 1, five sessions will proceed as parts of this symposium. The theme of Day 1 is "**Collections by Museums and Others: Diversity and Inclusion Beyond Postcolonialism**," discussing the functions and roles museums must embrace beyond postcolonial perspectives in collecting art from other ethnicities. With changes in the globalization paradigm and the increasing number of immigrants in Korea, a better understanding of different cultures has become a pressing matter. This symposium will give the MMCA a sense of direction as it advances into an international art museum advocating diversity and acceptance in the era of globalization. The keynote speech will be given by **Tony Bennett, research professor in social and cultural theory at the Institute of Culture and Society of Western Sydney University**, an authoritative figure in cultural theory and museum studies.

Session 1, opened by Tony Bennett, will focus on how Australia's indigenous art has become institutionalized in the process of accepting its colonial history, exploring the idea in conjunction with the colonial discourse of "otherness," which could not be defined by the dialogues on post-structuralism. He has also analyzed the power structure in exhibitions through his book, *The Birth of the Museum* (1995).

In Session 2, Lisa Horikawa, deputy director of collections development at National Gallery Singapore, will examine how the national museum of Singapore, a nation that has naturally come to include different races and cultures since its independence from the Federation of Malaysia, defines and collects art from different cultural origins. Following Horikawa, Jang Yeop, head of the education and culture department at MMCA, will present MMCA's future collection strategies towards diversity and inclusion based on his studies of the MMCA collections. Im San, assistant professor in the Department of Curatorial Studies and Art Management at Dongduk Women's University, will brief on the historical and theoretical background of museum art collections and propose ideal perspectives and attitudes towards the era dominated by Western artistic and cultural discourses. Lastly, Joan Young, director of curatorial affairs at the Guggenheim Museum, will introduce the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative and discuss methodologies for researching and collecting artworks from geographical regions that have been neglected from the modern art scene.

The theme of Day 2 is "Museum Collection Strategy and Remediation: Rewriting Art— History, Digital Humanity, and Artwork Destiny." Sessions 3 through 5 deal with problems arising from collecting diverse media and materials in the context of today's ever-changing art formats and how to approach them. As museum collections are closely linked to the programs of each institution, such as exhibitions, education, and preservation, museums are required to reconsider their physical and value systems. This portion of the symposium will highlight the changes happening in contemporary art and the problems of contemporary art collection in search of practical solutions implementable by MMCA. Terry Smith, Andrew W. Melon Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Pittsburgh, will open with a keynote speech. Led by Terry Smith, Session 3 will examine the ways in which contemporary art museums intervene in the art system, operating and controlling art history through their collections. Smith has explained the notion of the general term "contemporary" in his book *What is Contemporary Art?* (2009).

In Session 4, Sven Beckstette, curator at Hamburger Bahnhof Museum for Contemporary Art, will present newfound revelations in Germany's social history centering around his experience of organizing the exhibition *Hello World. Revising a Collection* held at Hamburger Bahnhof. Marcella Lista, chief curator of the New Media Collections at Centre Pompidou, will analyze significant exhibitions from *Les Immatériaux* by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1985) to recent shows, explaining how museum art collections have been studied, exhibited, preserved, and remediated within the institutions. Emily Pugh, Getty Research Institute's digital humanity specialist, will give an overview of Getty's digital humanities project collective of images, information, and data, suggesting that art institutions' collected works can serve as more than keepsakes when they are applied or reproduced into a variety of programs.

In Session 5, Jang Sunny, curator at MMCA, will present multiple perspectives on the life and cycles of works that exist out of the audiences' sight. Following Jang, Oh Inhwan, department chair of painting at Seoul National University College of Fine Arts, will explain, from an artist's perspective, how conceptual artworks contradict the purpose of collection. Lastly, Beryl Graham, professor of new media art at the University of Sunderland, will share various case studies of artists to address the recent issues in collection and restoration surrounding new media art.

Bartomeu Marí, director of the MMCA, announced, "The museum research project will present expanded terrain maps of Korean contemporary art for the domestic and international art scenes."

□ For general enquiries, please call +82-2-3701-9500 (MMCA Seoul)