

... was not only deprived of that share, but was herself considered as property to be inherited by man. Among many nations including Arabs in the Days of ignorance, a step-son or brother took possession of a dead man's widow or widows along with his goods and chattels. This shameful custom is forbidden. Allah ordains:

O ye who believe!
You are forbidden to inherit
Women against their will.
Nor should you treat them

But the greatest bliss
Is the Good pleasure of Allah:
That is the supreme felicity (IX : 72)

It will thus be seen that there exists in Islam absolute gender equality. Particularly to note in the Holy Quran the masculine gender is used generally, in speaking of a mixed assembly of men and women.

(Acknowledgement: Profusely quoted from the Holy Quran: Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali).

The Renaissance of the Guimet Museum

Henri Gaudin

It was to give back to the building its former splendour, to re-assert its structure in a clear and gay. The role of a museum is to offer hospitality as much as to its visitors; this is especially so in Asian art, where it is the spacing, the blank space, that mitigate the subject itself. And, as in emptiness that brings a subject to life, falling winding itself into the trees and gathering in a cloud. So hollow and loose is the very structure between full and empty, that it is pay too much attention to passages, openings and spaces between exhibited objects.

importance of the large Khmer art room that is from the entrance and onto which the museum converges. Thus the works are linked in an artistic way. It is possible to perceive between them relationships indispensable to the understanding of art. At the same time, in this way the visitor finds their bearings.

on the necessity of establishing spatial links, spaces between the floors which extend the view or to another, thanks to the voids created by levels. In this way vertical liaisons were developed. On the flank of the India gallery, one can with an view the heights of Tibet. This breakthrough development of a large plan for a staggered approach. The vertical dimension of the space, thus the use of light, bring into relief the sculpture in the wall. Similarly, an opening in the ceiling of a collection provides a sense of depth to the view into the gallery of the upper level devoted to China. A wall climbs up to the floor given over to Tibet, evoking hollowed out cliffs. It is the whole itinerary that opens itself out to visitors to allow them to appreciate the scale of Chinese civilisation. Finally, collections from Japan, Korea and China converge in the central patio, offering a view of three sides of a single prism.

perspectives: gain height; escape the restricted floors; capture points of view; arrange pre-establish affinities between works; unify the spaces around the large Khmer room and around a large hall; to balance the entire building by large stairs placed symmetrically in the rotunda; a hall on the ground floor; these are expressions to create accessible connections. One is seen in it comes to Asian art, the positioning of the structures, paintings, ceramics, the area they surround them, is of utmost importance. We have given thought to everything: in glass, separation and appositions, repetitions;

and free associations. Sometimes, it is the sculpture collections which have been arranged, sometimes different alignments, always in the spirit of aeration: in constellations and in more ordered layouts.

Equally, the large ground-floor room is not only an exhibition space for Khmer art; it is also, like the courtyard that lies above it, the museum's heart, its breath, the lung through which entire collections can be beheld. It is this space that is shared by the Asian world.

We considered Angkor Vat, the buildings of Banteay Srei or even Angkor Thom: all sculptures appear there next to successive stone facades and in relation to architectures onto which balustrades, pavilions, galleries and mountain temples, tiered-shaped towers and extraordinarily exuberant concretions are overlaid. The artists' genius shines forth in the bas-reliefs and in the way in which the sculpture emerges: fine, delicate reliefs and exuberant bas-reliefs, high-reliefs and very high-reliefs, round knobs which are like the avant-garde of a stone facade. This is the reason for which, even though we had triangular pediments covering the entrances of the pavilions, we opted to fix them on a wall, a solid facade, rather than displaying them in an isolated manner. It is for practical reasons that it seems preferable to insert them in relief, on the facing of a wall marking the hollow of a door which they crown. Before this frontispiece, the protruding figures appear as the avant-garde of the subject on which they are in relief. One can never adequately emphasise the advantage of making the most of natural light - the curators gave us great encouragement in this respect, without detracting from the necessity to correct it, to divert it, to conceal its source, to work its intensity, through a canopy, through curtains, through reflections on the walls or even, as in the gallery set aside for China, through the depth of the settings of the large windows on either side of which display cases are placed. Devices which, like others, thus create machines of luminosity through which it is possible to modulate not only the intensity of light but also its tone, its grain, its matt or gloss qualities. We can see, therefore, that whatever the degree of abstraction required by museography, it is sometimes useful to make reference, covertly, to an elsewhere, an outside, to the courtyard which, crowning the whole, will be a lantern. So, in Japanese, Korean, and Central Asian gallery, it is a tree, a sky, which mingles with the work.

To be attentive to the coherence of the pathways, to the ease of the itinerary, to give the space its openness, to offer the visitor paths as silky as the admirable materials that accompany the paintings and that we will be allowed to admire: this is, we think, to remain faithful to cultures the least of whose works provides a veritable breath of fresh air for our inner life of thought and feeling.

DB Officials Quit, Protest Inadequate Safeguards

Richard Mahapatra

ior officials quit the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in July this year over the dilution of environmental and resettlement policy, triggering a crisis

als were part of the safeguard policy update had been working to evolve a new safeguard system. Currently ADB's safeguard policies consist of distinct elements: policies on involuntary resettlement and the indigenous people. The former will be overarching, which ADB says is easier to implement.

ADB sources, a director in the environment and safeguard division invited another specialist, involved with the update and is considered a society group, to remove some strong recommendations, especially on policy issues relating to the indigenous people, without informing them which put together the first draft.

their position, the officials said in a joint reso-

...we noted that a third party was requesting the revision of regional and sustainable development those parts of the safeguard policy elaborated by the specialists of the safeguard policy team. ...we regard this document not to be suitable for disclosure to the public."

tion recommended provision of prior information to affected people about rights as also their planning, implementation, monitoring and also mandated local consent for compensation. These have been watered down, recommendations are based on the bank's own draft also suggested the principle of

This was changed to a 'replacement value' principle, meaning depreciated valuation of assets. Similarly, it recommended independent evaluation twice a year, to evaluate compliance and in case of sustained failure, blocking of payments and cancellation of operations. This has been toned down to withholding of payments for specific project components.

In a statement to NGOs, ADB has denied allegations. More than 20 civil society groups are, however, opposing this initiative as a dilution of ADB's already ineffective environmental and resettlement policies. "ADB doesn't have a great track record of implementing these policies. When key members of the bank closely involved with the update process resign, it doesn't provide us with much confidence that things are moving in the right direction," says Shefali Sharma of Bank Information Centre, an advocacy group that monitors multilateral agencies. "Overall, the earlier version is much stronger than the changed one. (It) retains a higher level of specificity in the language that makes clear both what is required to comply with the policy and the reasons for which such measures are required," says Joanna Levitt of International Accountability Project, based in Berkeley, California, who has read both the drafts.

Critically, ADB's Operation Evaluation Department study in 2006 found the bank underestimating numbers of project-affected people by 65 per cent. An evaluation study on environmental safeguards, released in July 2007, also pointed out inconsistencies in meeting its own safeguards. "As a part of this study, an 'internal desk study' of 15 projects found that 'the resettlement processes and outcomes are uniformly unsatisfactory,'" says Souporno Lahiri of People's Forum against ADB, a coalition of civil society