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Multi Disciplinary  
Journal in the  
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'Arts in Asia'  
UNESCO Observatory  
Multi Disciplinary  
Journal in the Arts  
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# UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Journal in the Arts

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## ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is based within the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. The journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.

Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

# Editorial

**Shalini Ganendra**

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Guest Editor

## INTRODUCTION

The 'Contemporary' embraces the dynamic of the current. Thus, contemporary thought should also ideally encourage multidisciplinary curiosity, encounter and engagement. This multidisciplinary dynamic, fuelled by creativity, is the platform for the Vision Culture Lecture program ('VC Lectures'), launched in 2010 by Shalini Ganendra Fine Art ('SGFA'), in Malaysia, with the endorsement of the UNESCO Observatory. Over this short and enriching period, the VC Lectures have developed an informing presence in the region, fostering meaningful global discourse and cultural encounter, to inform the Contemporary.

SGFA is a pioneering cultural organization, embracing an eclectic and quality sensibility for collecting, consideration, capacity building and place making. We value new visuals - whether for materiality, concept or culture - and multidisciplinary processes in their creation. In addition to the VC Lectures and exhibition program, SGFA has: an artist residency program (the 'Vision Culture Art Residency'); an arts management residency for university students (the 'Exploring East Residency'); and the PavilionNOW project which celebrates local architects, contemporary design and materiality. Through these programs and a growing interest in emerging regions, we delight in the increasing international engagement with our represented areas of South East Asia and Sri Lanka.

Over twenty three speakers have participated in the VC Lectures since their inception, each invited because of eminent reputations and notable contributions within respective fields. The lecture module involves free public talks at the SGFA's award winning green space (designed by Ken Yeang), Gallery Residence, with external lectures often hosted by other local institutions and organized by SGFA. Participating curators generally conduct portfolio reviews with local artists, learning more about regional geopolitics and art practices. Strong press coverage enables outreach beyond the urban populace, as does active social and digital media. Speakers stay at the Gallery Residence and enjoy vernacular space that embraces natural ventilation and cooling systems, elegant aesthetic and greening philosophies. The VC Lecture program is as much about cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary encounters as it is about content – all defining platforms for SGFA's exhibition programming as well.

The eleven luminaries published in this peer-reviewed UNESCO Observatory journal were selected for a variety of reasons including expertise. They are: Sir Roy Calne (award winning surgeon and artist, UK); Christopher Phillips (Curator, International Center of Photography, NYC); Anoma Pieris (Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture, University of Melbourne); Susan Cochrane (curator and authority on Pacific Art); Volker Albus (Professor of Product Design at the University of Arts and Design Karlsruhe, Germany); Michiko Kasahara (Chief Curator at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Japan); Matt Golden (Artist/Curator); Gregory Burgess (Architect, Order of Australia); Beth Citron (Curator, Rubin Museum NYC); Oscar Ho (curator and academic, HK); and Brian Robinson (Torres Island artist and curator, Australia).

Sir Roy Calne speaks of personal experiences using art to nurture empathy in his medical practice and his own passion for creating. Christopher Phillips, the pioneering curator credited with introducing Chinese contemporary photography to the United

States, writes about an important exhibition that he curated at the International Center of Photography. Anoma Pieris considers the impact of modernism on architecture in South Asia, and analyses supportive political and social ideologies, while Gregory Burgess tackles the place of architecture in creating a sense of individual and community belonging. Volker Albus, playfully but seriously asks us to consider the role of designers as technical and social mediators. Michiko Kasahara adeptly reviews challenges faced by successful contemporary Japanese photographers in addressing and reflecting Japanese culture, real and perceived. Susan Cochrane explores cultural ownership of Pacific Art through the use of terminology and context. Brian Robinson writes about his personal cultural narrative as a Torres Island artist. Beth Citron shares insights on Francesco Clemente's acclaimed '*Inspired by India*' exhibition which opened at the Rubin Museum in 2014. Oscar Ho speaks to the challenges of curatorship and requirements to sharpen its impact and discipline. Matt Golden shares the visual journey of his art alter-ego, Juan Carlos, with special focus on experiences in Malaysia. We bring to you a wonderful mix of multi-disciplinary and cultural discussions that show the exhilarating impact of this program.

The Vision Culture Program enters its sixth year and we look forward to its continuing impact as a pivotal program to foster meaningful global discourse. We have forged strong friendships and benefitted from cross cultural discovery thereby building platforms for more informed understanding and appreciation of our world.

Many thanks to Lindy Joubert, Editor-in-Chief of the UNESCO Observatory journal, and her marvelous team, for supporting this project from its inception; to SGFA's Exploring East Residents who assisted with editing these texts and most importantly, the amazing Vision Culture Lecture participants who have fostered knowledge, encounter and consequently, the Contemporary.

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# Art & Surgery

## AUTHOR

**Sir Roy Calne**  
Cambridge,  
United Kingdom

## BIOGRAPHY

Sir Roy Calne, celebrated surgeon and member of the Royal Society, performed the first liver transplant in Europe in 1968 and the world's first liver, heart and lung transplant in 1987. He served as a Professor of Surgery at Cambridge University for over thirty years. In addition to numerous medical accolades, he has been nominated twice for the Nobel Prize for Medicine. He uses his art to explore the emotional aspect of surgery, and has exhibited extensively including at the Barbican Gallery, London.



Like most children, I found great pleasure in drawing and painting at an early age. I painted animals, ships, cars and trains: the things that interest young boys. At school I had the good fortune to be taught by an outstanding art master, Francis Russell Flint, son of the celebrated artist William Russell Flint and famous for his water-colors of beautiful nudes and partly clothed ladies. Flint taught us to use our imagination whilst painting and sketching and explained that a technical approach alone was not enough to produce 'a work of art.' My love of art extended beyond painting to the practical illustration of science projects, especially biological ones, and I spent many hours drawing dissection specimens and images under the microscope.

As a medical student I had an opportunity to copy a Degas pastel in the Tate Gallery. The authorities probably thought I looked shabby enough to be an art student and did not enquire further, but I doubt that a medical student would have been permitted to set up an easel in the Tate. I spent many hours copying the Degas in oils and realized that the artist had probably needed only a few minutes with his bold pastel strokes.

My interest in painting continued and I met many other surgeons with great artistic interest and talent. A surgical friend in Singapore, Earl Lu, taught me the rudiments of Chinese painting and how to use the Chinese brush. Several of my surgical colleagues in Cambridge are keen painters; we spent some of our weekends with the gifted teacher Ron Ranson, who emphasized simplicity and a bold approach. His extraordinary enthusiasm was infectious and he seemed to be able to get the best out of his pupils, regardless of their level of skill.



Although many doctors and surgeons draw and paint, their subject matter is usually deliberately removed from their work. My interest, however, has been influenced by the extreme bravery, suffering, elation and happiness I witnessed during the early days of organ transplantation. The idea of organ transplantation stems from the miracle of the identical twins St. Cosmas and St. Damian, who are the patron saints of surgery. It is reported that they transplanted a leg from a recently deceased corpse to an early member of the church who suffered from cancer. This surgical *tour de force* has been portrayed in churches all over Europe; perhaps the most beautiful are Fra Angelico's simple and quietly elegant depictions.

The distinguished Scottish artist John Bellany was a patient of mine: he had a liver transplant 25 years ago, and in the course of his recovery painted 60 watercolour images showing liver transplantation from the patient's point of view. He filled his room and the corridors of the ward during the three weeks he was in hospital. He and I became friends and he gave me a series of very useful lessons, especially on the use of color in painting. During one session, we both painted each other and I realized how extremely different the image of recovery was for the patient as opposed to the doctor. His self-images showed a saintly, heroic figure, whereas my portrait of him depicted a very sick man recovering from a major surgical procedure.

John Bellany abruptly stopped his teaching sessions, but we remained friends for the rest of his 25 years following the transplant operation. He died recently, but painted vigorously through last days of his life.

At the time I treated John, organ transplantation was a relatively new specialty; it had never been the subject matter of artists (except for depictions of the medieval saints Cosmas and Damian). Over the past twenty years, I have attempted to depict images of transplantation from the point of view of a surgeon. I have painted patients, colleagues, the pioneers who

have developed the science and surgery of transplantation and the operation itself. I have also depicted the surgical and anatomical features of some of the more complicated operations. In the course of trying to execute these images, I have formed friendships with patients, especially children, that previously would not have been possible due to time constraints and the traditional formality of the doctor/patient relationship.



I have found this practice extremely rewarding, especially with children who lost their fear of the hospital and became intrigued with (and very critical of) the image-making. I made photocopies of my drawings and we coloured the images together. Thus I was able to become friends with children who previously had been terrified by the hierarchical ward rounds and unpleasant memories of doctors, nurses and hospitals.

I had very little practice or experience in figurative painting until my contact with John. I tried to learn the techniques of life drawing, but although I have a reasonable knowledge of human anatomy, I found it surprisingly difficult to portray a

foreshortened arm or the trace of a smile. I like to draw and paint quickly, partly because I am always short of time, but also because models rapidly get tired, lose expression and move their figures. I am always amazed how facial expressions can change so rapidly but always retain characteristics that identify one individual from another.



I am also interested in sculpture, particularly modelling in clay and wax. This has many features in common with surgery: both rely on the manipulation three dimensional bodies. I have found the medium, although static, sympathetic to the portrayal of movement, particularly dance and sport. To focus on all three dimensions of a model requires a different sort of mental focus than working in two dimensions with paint or lead, but what I learn from sculpture can facilitate drawing and painting and vice versa. Although the potential for image-masking is limitless in two dimensions, attempting to extend the perceived static restrictions of three-dimensional sculpture is a recurring and intriguing task.



Painting, drawing and sculpture have similarities to surgery: both require careful planning, skill and technique and a familiarity with the available tools and materials. However, a bad image can be discarded without regret, a choice that is not available when dealing with the life of a patient. In both disciplines, the challenge to do better is always present, but perfection will never be achieved.

In the future, when organ transplantation is established as a routine and straightforward part of surgery, doctors will look back and wonder why we had so much trouble developing the technique. I hope that my paintings will go some way towards answering this question and capturing the disappointments and excitements of transplant surgery.

