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Introduction

For too many decades, the International Association of Art Critics, like the "international" art-world, was a predominantly Eurocentric entity. As exclusionary Modernism has given way to postmodern inclusiveness and greater awareness of multicultural issues, the situation within AICA has also changed: during the past decade AICA has made great strides toward geographical and cultural inclusiveness. Our organization now embraces and unites nearly 4000 art critics in more than seventy national sections around the world, in eastern as well as western Europe, in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as north America, in Africa as well as North Africa, in central Asia as well as eastern Asia. We have become a community of colleagues in a network that can truly claim to be multicultural and international.

When former AICA-Japan President Masiyoshi Homma, with great foresight and vision, proposed a few years ago that the Japanese section of AICA wished to host the 1998 Congress, his offer was unanimously welcomed by the members of the board of AICA, which had long hoped for closer ties with colleagues and national sections in Asia. Under Mr. Homma's presidency, the Japanese section hosted a truly memorable Congress. Admirably organized by Mr. Fumio Nanjo, General Secretary of the Congress, and his staff, it was a tremendous success, and the events and excursions of the 1998 Congress will long remain highlights in the memories of all who attended. We were introduced to extraordinary new museum architecture, beautifully curated exhibitions, impressive new visual technology, and provocative new art. For many participants, it was also an introduction to the pre-modern modernity of traditional temple and palace architecture, garden design, and traditional Japanese art. Above

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all, the symposium program introduced critics from diverse cultures to new ideas, unfamiliar concepts and issues, and a spectrum of cultural perspectives in the work of Japanese and Asian colleagues, opening a fruitful cross-cultural dialogue and broadening the understanding of everyone involved.

That the 1998 AICA Congress took place in Japan was doubly significant. It marked a special year for AICA: our 50th anniversary. It also marked a turning point: as the first Congress organized by an Asian section of AICA, it affirmed AICA's new multiculturalism and initiated a true dialogue among equals. And it not only fostered international cultural and intellectual exchange, a primary aim of AICA, but expanded the discourse between East and West. We hope for continuing close ties and a fruitful ongoing dialogue in AICA's second half century.

On behalf of all members and delegates, board members, and officers of AICA, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Masiyoshi Homma, and to Mr. Fumio Nanjo and his staff, and to all the Japanese members of AICA for their gracious invitation, warm hospitality, and excellent organization of a memorable Congress. I offer best wishes to the new President of AICA-Japan, Mr. Hariu. And last but not least I wish to thank all sponsors and others who made this event possible.

Kim Levin

President of AICA

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