

Editorial

Response to the inaugural issue of *di'van | A Journal of Accounts* has been compelling such that the obligation to charge the journal with an editorial has become *de rigueur*. The imprint's gestation evolved from a predisposition towards engaging the art historical, the sociopolitical and the theoretical, to act as, quoting academic Nikos Papastergiadis, "a crucial bridge to our region and a much needed perspective for the wider art world." The appellation *di'van* derived from a synthesis of enquiry and chance, perhaps like any idealistic enterprise: "divan", from the Persian *dīwān*, an account book; origin *dēvan*, booklet; also related to *debir*, writer; a word having evolved through a book of poems, a collection of literary passages, an archive, a book of accounts and collection of sheets, to an assembly, office of accounts, custom house, government bureau or councils chamber, and then to a long, cushioned seat found therein, which in this sense entered European languages: "divan" presents a shift in meaning over time, coexistent with evolving historical relationships between the East and West, and of, according to cultural theorist and art critic Nancy Adajania, "many connotations, that of a plenitude of narratives, but also of accountability: political, aesthetic and ethical." Apropos to any perceived passé indulgence of ink on paper in a hyperreal cosmos (of the seemingly bottomless pit of imperceptibility) of the Internet, the attested tangibility of the hand-presented and received 'business card' of accountabilities and narratives offsets the dubiety of the constellation, if not the Cloud.

While *di'van's* contextual boundaries speculate upon geopolitical regions considered germane to the Australian condition—the Middle East, greater Asia and the Asia-Pacific, such an approach of course will inevitably be mediated in relation to other cultural contexts. Predominantly through its military and immigration histories over the past century, Australia's sociopolitical and cultural contemporaneity has become increasingly infused by their resonant constitution and connectivity, from which flows a critical *raison d'être*—history underscores 'the contemporary'. The years 2014 to 2018 and beyond, for example, present a saturation of 'anniversaries' (for want of a better description) of events that give consequence to contemporary cultural aspirations: 2016 being the centenary of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and 2017, the Balfour Declaration, both European assertions that after six hundred years of Ottoman rule carved up the Middle East into mostly colonial subplots, the disorder and turbulence of which still influences global equanimity; 2017 being the seventy-fifth anniversary of The Fall of Singapore (and the end of another empire, along with European colonialism in the greater region); the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), at the time of publication being celebrated through the major exhibition *Sunshower: Contemporary Art from Southeast Asia 1980s to Now*, at the Mori Art Museum and National Art Centre, Tokyo; the centenary of the Russian Revolution and the spread of world communism and its subsequent but not total collapse; and the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 referendum that amended the Australian Constitution, the result of which recognised indigenous Australians as citizens for the first time; 2018, the seventieth anniversary of The Partition, the violence and dislocation of which continues to realise disharmony between India and Pakistan; and the establishment of the State of Israel, and *Al Nakba*, the Palestinian Tragedy... *ad infinitum*. Across these regions, through artistic expression and its multiple interpretations and translations, history assuredly underscores the contemporary.