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Title:

Speech at the Opening of the 'Arts of Japan' Exhibition, SAIT Building

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, AT THE OPENING OF THE
"ARTS OF JAPAN" EXHIBITION. S.A.I.T. BUILDING.

3/3/72.

DR. INGLIS, MR. GROSS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

IT IS EXTREMELY APPROPRIATE THAT THIS EXHIBITION OF THE ARTS OF JAPAN SHOULD BE ONE OF THE CENTREPIECES OF THE SEVENTH ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS. THE SIXTIES AND NOW THE SEVENTIES HAVE SEEN A REMARKABLE - AND WELCOME - GROWTH IN TRADE AND ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA. IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT THESE LINKS WILL BECOME STILL MORE IMPORTANT IN THE FUTURE.

BUT, LAMENTABLY, THESE VASTLY EXPANDED CHEQUE-BOOK CONTACTS HAVE NOT BEEN ACCOMPANIED - FOR MOST AUSTRALIANS ANYWAY - BY A COMPARABLE AWARENESS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY WEALTH AND DIVERSITY OF THE JAPANESE CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT.

FOR TOO MANY OF US, JAPANESE CULTURE IS ASSOCIATED ONLY WITH PAPER LANTERNS, COLOURED FANS AND MADAME BUTTERFLY - WHICH IS RATHER LIKE SAYING THAT THE AUSTRALIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE WESTERN HERITAGE IS CONFINED TO BUSHRANGERS IN TIN HATS AND TO BOOMERANGS.

PAGE 2.

WE STILL SUFFER, IN LARGE PART, FROM A MALAISE THAT AFFECTED EUROPEAN ARTISTS UNTIL THE LAST CENTURY - CULTURAL ARROGANCE. I'VE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY DURING A NUMBER OF VISITS TO JAPAN TO SEE AT FIRST HAND A LITTLE OF THE RICHNESS OF JAPANESE INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL LIFE. BUT I ADMIT I'M STILL VERY, VERY FAR FROM KNOWLEDGE, LET ALONE AUTHORITY. ONE CAN NO MORE SPAN THE RANGE OF JAPANESE ACHIEVEMENT ON A BRIEF VISIT TO TOKYO OR KYOTO THAN ONE CAN COMPREHEND THE EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE BY A SHORT, SHARP TOUR OF FLORENCE.

BUT EVEN A SHORT VISIT WAS ENOUGH TO SHOW HOW MUCH WE IN AUSTRALIA CAN LEARN ARTISTICALLY FROM JAPAN. AN EXHIBITION SUCH AS THIS PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A SHIFT IN PERCEPTION.

JAPANESE ART CHARACTERISED BY ITS BEAUTY, DISCIPLINED SEVERITY AND ELEGANT SIMPLICITY IS REFINED, LUXURIOUS - SUPERBLY CIVILISED. AT ITS FINEST IT TRANSCENDS REALITY TO THE ABSTRACT.

IF I'M CRITICAL OF THE WAY WE IN AUSTRALIA HAVE LARGELY IGNORED THE JAPANESE ACHIEVEMENT I MUST ADD THE HASTY RIDER THAT ONLY IN RECENT TIMES HAVE THE INTELLECTUALS OF AMERICA AND EUROPE COME TO APPRECIATE AND APPLY IT THEMSELVES. THE FIRST FLIRTATIONS OF THE OCCIDENT WITH IT WERE AT A DECORATIVE LEVEL OF THE SAME ORDER AS AN EARLIER AGE'S PREOCCUPATION WITH CHINOISERIE - VERY NICE, OCCASIONALLY EXQUISITE, BUT VERY SHALLOW.

THIS HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN FOLLOWED BY AN EXPLORATION OF THE INTELLECTUAL CONTENT OF THE JAPANESE ARTS AND AN APPLICATION OF THEM TO WESTERN VALUES - SUCH AS ONE SEES IN SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WORKS OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT.

JAPAN HAS DEVELOPED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S VERY GREAT CULTURES WITH A BREATHTAKING INTELLECTUAL SPAN. IT'S NOT CONFINED TO THE FINE ARTS - IN POETRY, DRAMA AND LITERATURE THE JAPANESE ACHIEVEMENT HAS BEEN UNIQUE AND MONUMENTAL. IT'S A TRADITION WHICH STRETCHES BACK OVER MANY, MANY CENTURIES BUT ONE WHICH IS STILL DEVELOPING AND EVOLVING TODAY - AS THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF JAPANESE FILM-MAKERS PROVE.

JAPAN'S WRITERS AND ARTISTS HAVE APPLIED TO THEIR OWN CENTURIES OF TRADITION AND HISTORY AN INTELLECTUAL FLEXIBILITY AND WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT AND ADAPT THE FORMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE WEST - WHICH WE IN AUSTRALIA COULD WELL EMULATE.

SIR, THERE IS A DISTINCTIVELY ASIAN FLAVOUR TO THIS SEVENTH FESTIVAL. I AM DELIGHTED THAT THIS IS SO. WE HAVE FOR FAR TOO LONG BEEN IGNORANT OF OUR NEIGHBOURS OR GROTESQUELY PATRONISING TOWARDS THEM. IF THE DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITIONS OF THE COMING FORTNIGHT ASSIST IN BREAKING DOWN THESE BARRIERS THAT ALONE WILL HAVE MADE IT WORTHWHILE.

THIS IS A MAGNIFICENT AND MEMORABLE EXHIBITION WHICH WILL GIVE PLEASURE AND EDUCATION TO MANY AND I HAVE VERY MUCH PLEASURE IN NOW DECLARING IT OPEN.

THANK YOU.