

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA TO OPEN THE “MADE IN CHINA,  
AUSTRALIA” EXHIBITION AT THE BURNIE REGIONAL ART  
GALLERY, FRIDAY 1ST FEBRUARY 2013**

Thank you, Greg Leong for those kind words. May I say that it is always a pleasure for me and my wife to travel up to the beautiful North West coast of Tasmania, and in particular to visit the Burnie Regional Art Gallery. I was last here at the Gallery in October 2010 because Greg had invited me to open an exhibition of work produced over the previous 40 years by local artist Kit Hiller. At that time I publically confessed that I had some misgivings about my ability to open an art exhibition because my background as a lawyer is words, not pictures. Although my father was, and my brother is, an architect I missed out on the family genes that carry the capacity to create visual art; although I like to think that I inherited an appreciation of it. I recall telling those at the opening that my artistic shortcoming was such that for a wild moment I thought that instead of talking about art I should treat the audience to a learned discourse on the development of the writs of *venditioni exponas* and *fieri facias* in shaping the modern law of execution. So, I am flattered to have been asked to open “Made in China, Australia” because Greg must have known that this time there was a risk that I really would deliver such a learned discourse. As well as being flattered I also feel honoured that he asked me because this one, curated by Hong Kong born Greg Leong on a commission from the Salamanca Art Centre, is all about something that is very close to his heart: what does it mean to be a Chinese-Australian artist in this country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? I am

not sure if the works in the exhibition provide any clear-cut answers to that question but it certainly highlights the complexities of multiculturalism.

Of course, the Chinese diaspora is not a homogeneous group and as Greg points out in his essay there are Chinese Australians who are descendants of those who came to this country at the time of the gold rush, there are those who came later for the education Australia offered under such schemes as the Colombo Plan and stayed on, many of them marrying Australians, and then, much later, there are the Chinese refugees, and Chinese from the Pacific and Taiwan and so on, all of whom joined the diaspora here in Australia. So this exhibition looks at the question of how is the work of Chinese Australian artists affected by the type of Australian Chinese that they are?.

In her preface to this exhibition Rosemary Miller from the Salamanca Arts Centre expresses the view that the work of the sixteen artists collected for the “Made in China, Australia” exhibition “brings an exploration of the work and complex concerns of key Chinese-Australian artists”, most of whom, it is interesting to note, work internationally.” She writes, “Disparate discomfiting views and experiences and strongly shared resonances of Chinese-Australian identity have emerged through the curator’s drawing together of these artists and their work.” Greg Leong appears to agree with this view for he refers to the long period in Australia’s history during

which the White Australia policy applied and notes that with respect to two of the Australian born Chinese artists it is only recently that one of them has acknowledged her Chinese ancestry in her work while another has always “relentlessly” pursued his Chinese roots.

According to Dean Chan, the founding convener of the international Network for Diasporic Asian Research, “this exhibition enters into dialogue with the history and contemporaneity of Chinese transnationalism by drawing attention to how it has evolved within one particular context of Diasporic settlement.” I’ll leave that statement to you to think about but I can assure you that there certainly is a great deal to interest you in this fine collection of Chinese-Australian work.

So in opening “Made in China, Australia” I congratulate Greg Leong on making yet another major contribution to the cultural life on the Coast. As I am sure everyone here knows, next month Greg will leave the Burnie Regional Art Gallery and go to Launceston to take up the position of General Manager of Theatre North in Launceston. Greg has an incredibly long and distinguished career in the performing and visual arts. He has two degrees from the Hong Kong University, one of which is a Master of Philosophy in drama. He gained a postgraduate qualification in arts management from the University of Westminster in the United Kingdom. Greg has worked as a presenter and fine music producer at Radio-Television Hong Kong, as Youth & Music’s first Marketing Officer in London and at

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the Hong Kong Arts Centre as Head of Program Department. He immigrated to Australia in 1981 and was the Director of Tasmanian Regional Arts for six years before re-training in 1988 as a visual artist at the Tasmanian School of Art where he completed a Bachelor of Fine Art and later obtained a Graduate Diploma in Visual Arts and finally he was awarded a Master of Fine Art and Design.

Greg was the lecturer in charge of the Textile Studio at the school from 1996 until 2001. He is the author of six major essays published in Australian and international books and over 30 other articles.

He has exhibited regularly since 1988. He works in digital imaging, textiles and installation, often using costume as a signifier for race, sexuality and cultural identity. His work has been about being gay, Chinese and Australian. Outside of Australia, his work has been seen in many international group exhibitions.

Greg's work is represented at the National Gallery of Australia, the State art galleries of New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania, and Northern Territory, the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, the University of Tasmania, and in other public spaces.

There is a lot more to tell you about the things that Greg has achieved but time does not permit me to go on. However, there is

absolutely no doubt that Greg Leong has made a huge contribution to the arts in his adopted country. After four and a half years, under his stewardship the former Burnie Civic Centre has been reinvented as the Burnie Arts & Function Centre with a thriving program of performing arts through the new subscription season, surpassing the numbers of subscribers in larger Tasmanian centres with similar schemes. There is a thriving community arts program as well, while the Burnie Regional Art Gallery continues to thrive with some 30 exhibitions a year and numerous other activities. You will be sorely missed Greg when you leave this Gallery and whilst not wishing to inflame parochialism, Burnie's loss will be Launceston's gain. As Governor of this State I would like to take this opportunity to express the thanks of all Tasmanians, especially those who live in this region, for your drive, enthusiasm and creative energy that has enriched the lives of so many. We thank you and wish you well in your new position.