

Good evening.

It is my great pleasure to say a few words at the Opening Night of *'Cutting Through Time – Cressida Campbell, Margaret Preston, and the Japanese Print'* exhibition. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to meet the artist Cressida herself tonight, and to see her work and other wonderful artworks up close.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Geelong Gallery for organising and hosting this exhibition. Senior Curator Ms Lisa Sullivan has done an amazing job of bringing together the best of Japanese Ukiyo-e and woodblock paintings and prints of two of Australia's most revered artists. I would also like to thank the City of Greater Geelong, Creative Victoria and all exhibition partners for supporting this event. The City of Greater Geelong has a sister city relationship with Izumiotsu in Osaka Prefecture and this year marks their 32nd anniversary. I am originally from Osaka and it is good to see that the ties between the two cities remain strong after all these years. As you may already know, Osaka will host the World Expo next April, and preparations are currently underway. I hope many of you here will find the time to visit the Osaka-Kansai Expo next year!

Before this opening night, I had the chance to look around the exhibition briefly and was delighted to see many of the great historical Japanese Ukiyo-e from the Geelong Gallery Collection and other Australian public collections, displayed alongside works by Australian artists, Cressida and Margaret. I am confident that this artistic cultural exchange will contribute to the enhancement of mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and Australia.

Now, I would like to briefly talk about the history of Japanese Ukiyo-e. I believe most of you have

seen Ukiyo-e, such as Hokusai's 'The Great Wave'. Ukiyo-e, which literally means pictures of the floating world, originally depicted the everyday life of people living in the city of Kyoto in the late sixteenth century and became a popular art form in the Edo period. The term 'Ukiyo - floating world' referred to life in the entertainment districts, especially where kabuki theatres were located, but the word also suggested being modern, chic, and fashionable.

The general public was extremely fascinated by the glamorous entertainers of the floating world, such as kabuki actors, and collected mementos in the form of Ukiyo-e. The most popular subjects of Ukiyo-e were these entertainers, as can be seen in the exhibition. It was not until much later, when people were able to afford traveling for leisure that landscapes became the subjects of Ukiyo-e.

The selection of Ukiyo-e prints in *Cutting Through Time* represents the most important artists of the era, and the exhibited works span across centuries, reflecting the evolution of Ukiyo-e as an art form over time. The works in this exhibition illustrate a rich dialogue between centuries of artistic production, and the wide cultural, technical, compositional, and aesthetic references that artists such as Cressida and Margaret have drawn from.

I know you are all looking forward to the exhibition, so I will wrap up my speech now. Tonight, I would like you all to immerse yourself into the world of printmaking and observe the unique connection between artworks of both countries.

Thank you for listening and enjoy the exhibition!