Since the end of World War II and the reconciliation between Japan and the west, there has been an ever increasing study and appreciation of the ways in which Japan influenced western culture, especially visual culture. This passion for Japan though didn’t wait for the reconciliation between east and west that happened after World War II; in fact, it existed long before, perhaps even before the opening of Japan by Commodore Perry, but certainly soon after the moment when western countries became aware of Japanese culture and customs. Was this passion fueled by the fact that Japan had remained a closed, mysterious land for so long, thus provoking the curiosity of westerners? Or did the west recognize that there was something inherent in Japanese culture and art that would liberate it from tired conventions? These are some of the topics for discussion that have already been investigated since the study of Japan, its art and culture, became the movement known as Japonisme.

Identified by an enterprising French critic in 1872 as “Japonisme”, the influence of Japanese design eventually led to a full-fledged movement that helped western artists in all media achieve new heights of creative liberation. While some aspects of Japonisme have been carefully studied, others are only now receiving attention from scholars, collectors, museum curators and cultural historians. The range of inquiries has accelerated in recent years as the Japanese influence in many countries in the last decades of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century has stimulated widespread discussion, investigation, scientific appreciation and curiosity. Why this phenomenon happened at all awaits full elucidation. What were the reasons that Japonisme took such a bold hold on western creativity? And what were the ways in which different segments of a population, from the most erudite to the most popular, reacted to what were at first dawn a fad, then a cult, and eventually a concerted mania? And ultimately a fully integrated aspect of western art and design?

The challenge of investigating many areas of Japonisme dispassionately mandates the need for a Journal dedicated to this phenomenon. There are Japonistes (those individuals dedicated to the appreciation of this topic) all over the world. Initiating this publication, making it available electronically and in hard copy, will give people the opportunity of seeing
some of the newest examinations of Japonisme in one place. Essays will be accepted from everyone internationally; there will also be reviews of new publications, exhibitions, and collections, thereby providing ways in which the myriad number of people working on this material can find colleagues with whom they can share ideas in print. Eventually the number of people engaged by this publication will increase as the word gets out that the Journal of Japonisme is the organ through which knowledge about Japonisme can be disseminated.

While the flow of ideas and visual references has largely been addressed from Japan to the west, there was a similar, and no less effective, influence of the west on Japanese art, culture and society. Whether we call this a type of reverse Japonisme or whether it must be seen as one way in which Japan was trying to modernize itself during the Meiji era, it, too, brought the west closer to Japan. Essays focusing on this development are also welcome, as they will demonstrate a co-mingling of ideas that continue to keep alive the creative endeavors between east and west. But in order to understand where we are headed in Japonisme studies, it is imperative to understand where we have been, and to give a brief overview of the milestones in Japonisme in order to establish a firm foundation for future reference so that we don’t repeat what has already been done.

FRAMING THE BACKGROUND:
Among the earliest studies of Japonisme are two that have exerted a far ranging impact on academics and students. The first is an unpublished Master’s Thesis by Ethel Hahn "The Influence of the Art of the Far East on Nineteenth Century French Painters."ii This work immediately established that it was within the medium of painting that Japonisme could be seen; it also singled out French artists, those linked with Impressionism, and immediately situated Japonisme within the context of progressive modernism. Although strictly formalistic in its analysis, this thesis exerted a powerful influence on other academic considerations because it was first in pointing out the importance of Japan for western culture. Even though other avenues of inquiry have been pursued, contemporary authors and curators have found that by reusing these early methods of analysis, they can bring Japonisme more forcefully to the general public in many countries.iii Following Ethel Hahn’s early analysis, in 1943, Ernst Scheyer published his comprehensive “Far Eastern Art and French Impressionism” in The Art Quarterly.iv Expanding the study of Japonisme, Scheyer stressed cultural reasons for the
movement. He believed the west was ripe for change, for something decidedly new, seeing the ukiyo-e prints as one way in which the aesthetic standards of the Greeks were undermined by Japanese art. Once again, Scheyer examined the same group of progressive French artists who valued Japanese creativity. However, his emphasis on cultural context provided a direction that others have taken in an effort to carefully document the ways in which the movement took root in the west. Consequently, his work served as a precursor for deeper, more pointed investigations of how the effect of Japan was first seen and who the earliest promoters were, outside of the actual artists who maintained and stimulated the discussion.

By the decade of the 1970s, Japonisme studies had mushroomed. Robin Spencer’s book, *The Aesthetic Movement, Theory and Practice*, posited that England was not lagging in its appreciation of Japanese art, from the moment of the early arrival of objects in London (1862). Spencer, one of the key authors of this volume, demonstrated how a common bond of appreciation and collecting united England and France. Japanese artifacts were readily available in major cities such as London and Paris. The interest in spreading the word about Japonisme was given a significant boost with a major exhibition held in Munich in 1972 in conjunction with the 20th Olympiad. Although the exhibition (and associated publication) were not specifically Japanocentric, the fact that Japan was seen as a major stimulator for western design was significant. Many of the earliest investigators of Japonisme were given space in the publication that signaled the beginning of a period of cultural investigation.

THE ROLE OF JAPONISME EXHIBITIONS: A PUBLIC AWARENESS

Interest in Japonisme reached a fever pitch in both France and the United States by the mid-1970s with the development of two major exhibitions, *Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art, 1854-1910* from 1975-76 and *Le Japonsime* in 1988. Organized by major museums with large Asian art collections, and by curators and art historians who had a specific fascination with the movement, these exhibitions stimulated considerable discussion beyond academia. *Japanese Influence on French Art, 1854-1910*, first shown at the Cleveland Museum of Art in the summer of 1975, prior to being seen in two other American cities, received broad press coverage not only for the way in which the exhibition was conceived, but for the ways in which areas not yet covered in Japonisme studies – the applied and the graphic arts - were being studied alongside
painting. But the real impact of this exhibition was that it popularized the movement in the United States, made it understandable to a large public, and still maintained a high level of academic discussion that helped others to focus on the movement.

The second exhibition, *Le Japonisme*, organized by the Musée d’Orsay, offered an in-depth presentation to Paris and later to Tokyo, where it brought the impact of Japanese culture on the west to the full attention of the Japanese. There can be little doubt that this show, and the programs spawned by it in many locations, maintained the interest in the material, thus prompting innumerable other, smaller exhibitions to be developed. A number of these shows over the years also found their way to Japan. Through these exhibitions the interest in Japonisme was disseminated widely, the examples showing the influence of Japan were extensively studied, and appreciated. This all consuming interest led to the creation of a Japonisme Society in Japan, which is still thriving today.

Both the Cleveland and Paris shows demonstrated that Japonisme could be presented to the public in a cohesive and understandable way. The utilization of informative wall texts to explain many aspects of the phenomena, and the creation of intelligent publications, geared to the specialists as well as, a wide public, enhanced the didactic nature of the show in Cleveland, and beyond. (Figs. 1 and 2). With these two shows Japonisme entered public consciousness since the public was able to see and understand how pervasive the impact had been. Both exhibitions also set the stage for later shows that would continue to investigate the movement from many angles.

**THE ROLE OF SYMPOSIA:**

When an international symposium on “The Mutual Interests between Japanese and Occidental Arts” was held in Tokyo in December 1979, a full-scale attempt was made to have eastern and western scholars share their evolving interest in Japonisme. Drawing on scholars from France, Holland, England, Japan and the United States, the talks provided the chance for an interchange of ideas that was rare, and stimulating. The published papers, sponsored by the Committee for the Year 2001, provided a permanent record of what was presented so that those interested in the movement could refer to the texts at a later date. Both the symposium and the published papers provided a model of what could be achieved in this relatively new area of investigation, a paradigm that has yet to be equaled in terms of openness and
accessibility. Raising important questions of what the future of Japonisme studies would be was one of the key ways in which a platform for future investigation was established. Some of the issues have been pursued in later exhibitions and publications. But what was also emphasized in some of the talks, and in the eventual publication, was the fact that Japonisme had to move beyond stylistic studies that only vaguely showed the impact of Japanese art to achieve a deeper, more historically nuanced way of studying the range of issues that were being raised.

While the symposium in Japan had considerable funds to allow scholars from all over the world to convene, and for the significant publication that ensued, later symposia did not receive this kind of lavish backing. The Van Gogh Museum 2005 symposium organized in conjunction with the “The Bing Empire” exhibition was a smaller affair, but the fact that the papers presented at the symposium were later published on line (in the electronic journal 19thc-artworldwide.org) helped spread the continuing interest in the subject even if not all the papers focused on Japonisme per se. A more recent symposium, one organized at the University of Rennes in 2013, brought together international scholars in an effort to continue the discussions on Japonisme. The initial symposium of 1979, however, has remained the touchstone for major international work that has never again, sadly, been equaled anywhere else.

CONTINUING THE PURSUIT:

Japonisme studies lacked one significant ingredient in 1990: a publication that referenced the vast literature on Japan and Japonisme. The internet had not yet been invented, which meant that printed bibliographies on various topics, housed in library reference sections were the way scholars, students and others interested in Japonisme could find information. In 1990, *Japonisme: An Annotated Bibliography* initiated the process of meeting this particular need. It brought together material by authors from well known and little known nineteenth and twentieth century sources that were published in books, articles, essays in exhibition catalogues, and dissertations. While it was not complete (nothing could ever be), the vastness of the sources available from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was vast. We should also mention that prior to 1990 there had been two earlier bibliographies, one by Léon Pagès, *Bibliographie japonaise ou Catalogue des ouvrages relatifs au Japon qui ont été publiés depuis le XVe siècle jusqu’à nos jours*, published in France in 1859; and *Bibliography of the Japanese Empire: Being a
Classified List of all Books, Essays and Maps in European Languages Relating to Dai Nihon (Great Japan) Published in Europe, America and the East from 1859-93 (vol. I) & 1894-1895 (vol. II) by Friedrich von Wenckstern, published in Leiden in 1895 by E.J. Brill. Wenckstern included material published between 1859 to 1893 and 1894 to 1895 in a second volume. Another later edition that included a list of Swedish literature on Japan by Miss Valfrid Palmgren, Ph. D. was published in 1907 in Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto by The Maruzen Kabushiki Kaisha. The Wenckstern bibliographies are the best and most complete compilations of material published about Japan including, for the arts for example, books, articles, catalogues of exhibitions and sales worldwide. While these two bibliographies did not consider Japonisme, because the influence of Japanese art on the west had not yet become an area of study, they provided extensive information about Japanese history and culture. If the 1990 bibliography did nothing else, it proved that Japonisme was a substantial field of research, which had a history and an evolution that attracted scholars from all over the world. The subsequent appearance of a similar bibliography in Japan, including a wider range of sources published in Japanese, further supported this interest, revealing that the audience for Japonisme or Japanese studies in all fields was an expanding interest. The availability of research tools such as these advanced the continuing investigation of the field, providing easy reference materials so that scholars could apply what had already been published to the areas that they were investigating. The effect was electric, as a wide range of new investigations appeared, some with substantial new methodological points of view.

NEW AREAS, NEW APPROACHES:
The exhibition dedicated to Japan and Britain, An Aesthetic Dialogue, 1850-1930, organized by the Barbican Art Gallery in London and the Setagaya Museum in Japan in 1991 focused on the aesthetic interchange between English and Japanese artists in the various arts. Expanding on how Japan had either been changed by the west or the ways in which Japanese art had been presented in the west at international exhibitions proved invaluable. A group of Japanese and western scholars provided an admirable examination of the basic theme. The ways in which Japanese art and artists had been exposed to, or influenced by, the west remained a central argument. But it was The Japan Idea, Art and Life in Victorian America at the Wadsworth Atheneum in 1990 where Japonisme studies achieved a heightened relevancy and impetus. There are a number of reasons for this conclusion.
The exhibition and publication, examined the broad range of Japanese artifacts that were known and appreciated in the United States. Recognizing that it was American warships that had originally opened Japan to the west in the 1850s, the exhibition set out to probe how Japanese culture reached the United States and what the original reaction had been to the many popular art objects that reached America. Seeing that Japanese sculpture, carved objects in wood, lacquer ware and metalwork were equally as significant as Japanese prints effectively helped turn Japonisme in the direction of material culture, objects not always of the highest aesthetic range, but those that were known at the time. The rapidity with which Japanese motifs were used on ceramics produced by major manufactories such as Rookwood and Company in Cincinnati, Ohio further demonstrated how quickly all levels of society responded to the increasing mania for objects that came from Japan. But it was the idea of Japan that became all important. High aesthetic quality in the objects was not always the goal as they were created to appeal to the commercial demand for this material on the most mundane level.

As part of the increasingly global implications of Japonisme, two significant exhibitions and publications were organized that focused on reverse Japonisme. Paris in Japan, The Japanese Encounter with European Painting was held in 1987-88 at several locations in the United States. Held at the Washington University Art Gallery (St. Louis), the exhibition traveled to New York and California. It skillfully demonstrated how nineteenth century Japanese painters learned from academic teachers in Paris, revealing the ways in which some of them wanted to learn the western ways in order to compete and exhibit their works in various European or American venues; this also increased their reputation in their own country which was doing all it could to modernize and westernize itself. The second exhibition and publication that examined the global implications of the ties between Japan and the West was Japan Encounters the West, 16th-19th Century Art at the Kobe City Museum. Shown at the Seattle Art Museum in late 1987, the exhibition focused on the reception, synthesis and transformation by which Japanese creators responded to a range of western conventions. Making use of the increasing interest in reception theory, then increasingly prevalent in scholarly essays, the exhibition provided a rare glimpse of the ways in which Japanese artists used and attempted to assimilate western creative aspects in a wide range of art works. A section on the creation of Japanese export ware, designed solely for western consumption, presented an area of study that had received
little attention in previous discussions. It provided a rich field of inquiry, especially since the west often collected export ware with the belief that these objects reflected the highest creative endeavors in Japan without suspecting that they had been created only for the west during the Meiji era.

**SURVEY TEXTS:**

As Japonisme gained steam with the public, there has been an increasingly prolific interest in producing books that would educate the general public while also providing enough accurate information on the evolution of the movement to satisfy more sophisticated readers. These books, which have appeared since 1980, have generated some discussion, but none have become the basic tool, offering a complete view of the movement. Since they are a significant part of the Japonisme narrative, they need to be examined, in part here, because they are among the most accessible works that the public could turn to in obtaining an overview of Japonisme.

The earliest is Siegfried Wichmann’s *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art since 1858*. This huge compendium, first published in 1980 in German, and in English in 1981, provides a wealth of information and images for those interested in following a narrative linked to an appreciation of Japanese art studied through formalistic means. As a product of its day, the book remains exceptionally useful, since the author examines many varied art forms, and offers a wealth of visual juxtapositions between Japanese art and western art. Nonetheless, a number of issues impede its continued use. Since the book has been reprinted in paperback, there has not been an attempt to bring the book up-to-date with newer scholarship. In using largely art appreciation categories for a discussion of themes, Wichmann simplifies too much, hindering its continuing viability as a text that can be studied to advance in-depth scholarship. However, the book is still very useful in demonstrating the broad range of Japonisme and its impact well into the twentieth century.

Lionel Lambourne’s *Japonisme, Cultural Crossings Between Japan and the West* (2005) investigates the evolution of Japonisme from the earliest historical moments when Japan first encountered the west in the 1500s almost to the end of the 20th century. Looking at areas where Japonisme is most visible such as posters and the decorative arts, Lambourne, like Wichmann, favors an art appreciation investigation that is useful in showing the relationship
between works of art, but is somewhat less potent in its illustration of the cultural context for
the movement. Thanks to the excellent photographs of the works of art, Lambourne’s book
remains a visual compendium of images, some unknown previously to the public, but with a
text that is far too superficial to challenge interpretations from earlier decades. Still, because of
its wide distribution, the book serves as another available introduction to Japonisme.

Following the publication of Lambourne’s volume, another survey volume Japanesque:
The Japanese Print in the Era of Impressionism (2010) tried two different approaches. xvii First the
author, Karin Breuer tried to introduce a new name for Japonisme: Japanesque, thereby
confusing the matter of the title given to the movement without clarifying when this term was
first used in the nineteenth century and by whom. Second, by focusing on Japanese prints in
the era of the Impressionists, Breuer was going back over well trodden paths to where
Japonisme studies had begun fifty years earlier without taking into account the insights
published earlier. The use of the term Japaneseque to describe Impressionist art influenced by
Japanese art confuses the issue because art in the era of Impressionism is not “japanesque” but
Japoniste in nature. This is precisely because the artists had fully integrated Japanese ideas into
their work by that time. It was not a fad or fashion for them, but a new way of creating, a new
design vocabulary that they had studied and absorbed.

Another volume, Japonisme and the Rise of the Modern Art Movement, The Arts of the Meiji
Period (2013) edited by Gregory Irvine, opened new avenues of inquiry in Japonisme studies.xviii
In using a standing collection, the Khalili Collection, a group of scholars demonstrated how
objects produced in the Meiji period found their way to the west and how they exerted a strong
influence on collectors and artists. The arguments and visual examples included in the volume
set out the parameters of what could be a really significant area for future study, especially the
observation that Meiji artistic production until now has not received the kind of scrutiny it
deserves and has often been denigrated.

EXPANDING THE PARAMETERS:
As interest in Japonisme increased during the opening decade of the twenty-first century,
there has been a concerted effort to find new areas to examine; the study of new countries
where Japonisme had an impact in the closing decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth
century, as well as new methodologies that could be applied to this ever expanding field.
Among those is the *Orient Expressed. Japan's Influence on Western Art 1854-1918* exhibition held in Jackson, Mississippi and in San Antonio, Texas in 2012.\textsuperscript{xix} Both the exhibition and the book that was produced in conjunction with the show used many examples of popular culture, essentially from the United States, following up on the *Japan Idea* exhibition held earlier at the Wordsworth Atheneum. The goal of the show was the illumination of the widespread fascination with Japanese materials throughout America. At the same time, the exhibition explored in survey-like fashion, the ways in which Japonisme was found in many different types of paintings from Europe and the United States. The final result was a compendium of material that stressed a broad approach and acknowledged popular enthusiasm for Japanese materials everywhere and at several levels of society simultaneously.

Japonisme exhibitions have also been organized in many European countries such as Poland in 2011: *Japonizm Polski (Polish Japonisme)*, Spain in 2013: *Japonismo. La fascinación por el arte japonés*, Prague, Czech Republic, 2014: *Japonisme in Czech Art*, and Essen, Germany 2014, *Monet, Gauguin, van Gogh... Japanese Inspirations*, demonstrating that there has been an increasing effort to chart the ways in which many different nations responded to the Japanese craze at various moments in time. The latest exhibition, still in preparation, will open in Helsinki, Finland (2016). It will chart the course of Japonisme in all the arts in Scandinavia.\textsuperscript{xx}

Several other recent publications explore differing methodologies that have expanded the parameters of potential exploration. Among these is Christine Guth’s very original book *Longfellow’s Tattoos, Tourism, Collecting and Japan* (2004). Centering on Charles Longfellow, son of the American writer Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Guth examined the ways in which Longfellow’s trip Japan in 1871-73 had a far-reaching effect on his life.\textsuperscript{xxi} Guth’s book focused on what Longfellow learned and collected, on the photographs he secured, and on the tattoos that covered his body. The ideology of tourism as a phenomenon and as a way of introducing westerners to Japan was thus visible on an American who went to the country during the opening years of the Meiji era. Longfellow’s home in Boston (now a museum) as his body itself, promoted Japan when others came to see him and his house. The originality of Guth’s methodology, her ability to reconstruct the past and to interpret it in new ways, goes far beyond simplistic studies of influence from Japanese prints. Her book sets the record straight while demonstrating that there is a new field of inquiry that can examine travelers to Japan by
assessing the types of objects they brought back with them at a time when there was little information available on the materials they sent back to the United States.

Ricard Bru’s *Erotic Japonisme, the Influence of Japanese Sexual Imagery on Western Art* (2014), similarly opens new territory for Japonisme studies. While there have been numerous studies on the significance of Japan for fin-de-siècle art, shunga art has remained relatively unexplored. This new book brilliantly demonstrates the ways in which shunga prints, those widely collected by writers such as Edmond de Goncourt, or artists such as Edgar Degas, were used by many artists in their own works. Examining Toulouse-Lautrec, or the designer Rupert Carabin, among many others, provides a rich source of images that had not been adequately studied by art historians. The revelations are numerous and the opportunities for interactions between the east and west profound. With this book another avenue of discussion is possible as artists in the west found new ways to represent sexuality. The more natural, expressive mode of presenting the erotic, found in shunga prints, helped the west to reveal what had previously been thought of as secretive and forbidden.

GLOBALIZATION:

As new methodologies emerge, as Japonisme becomes more than a study of the influence of Japanese art on western art, it becomes increasingly relevant to examine issues and material from new perspectives. Not only is it possible to see Japonisme influencing an ever increasing number of countries and painters *i.e.*, high art, but also designers, architects, decorative art, and graphic artists. Soon there will be no corner of the world that has not been touched by Japonisme as this phenomenon also influenced the arts of literature, music, photography and film. It continues to influence these areas well into our own era.

The publication of this new journal raises the hope that a fresh and continuing interchange between areas of reference and expertise will blossom. The possibilities are endless, as Japonisme will move beyond the inquiry of a few scholars fascinated by the ways in which Impressionism used aspects of the Japanese print to provide new viewpoints to a more nuanced way of seeing its simultaneous influence on many areas of creativity. The future looks most promising as the *Journal of Japonisme* is poised to help in this heightened appreciation.

---

ii. Ethel Hahn, “The Influence of the Art of the Far East on Nineteenth Century French Painter’s” MA Thesis, University of Chicago, 1928. In the early years of Japonisme studies this MA Thesis was continually sought by many through inter-library loan.


xiv. *Japan Envisions the West, 16th-19th Century Art from Kobe City Museum*, Edited by Yukiko Shirahara (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1987).


xx. This show is called “Japanomania in the North”.
