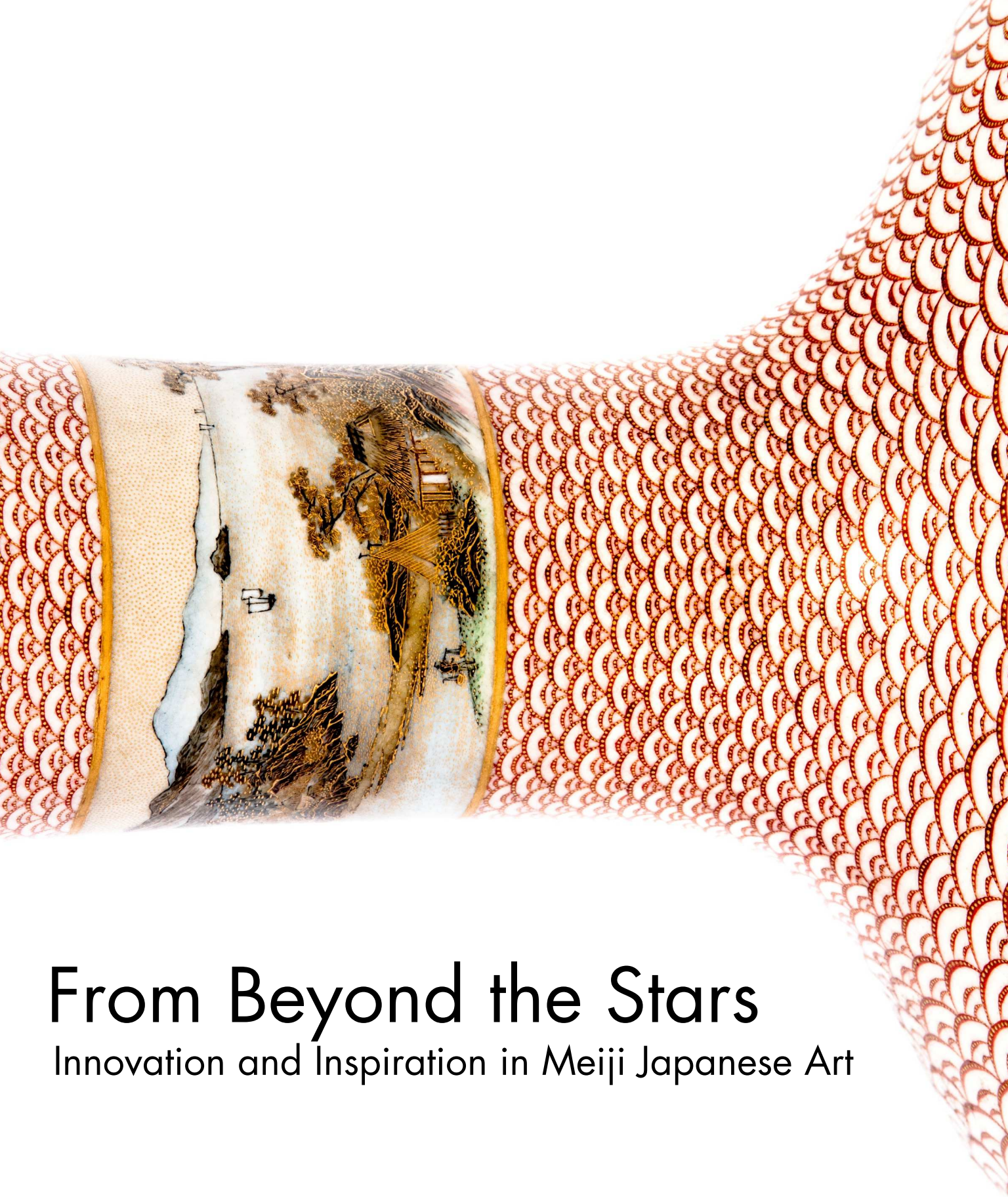


From Beyond the Stars

Innovation and Inspiration in Meiji Japanese Art

Design by Tom Wagner. Photography by the Kruizenga Art Museum, Tom Wagner, and Curatorial Assistance/WorldBridge Art, Inc. Produced by Storming the Castle Pictures (StCP) for the Kruizenga Art Museum as a catalogue for the exhibition, "From Beyond the Stars," August 29 - December 16, 2017.

www.HOPE.edu, www.WORLDBRIDGEART.org, www.STORMINGtheCASTLEPICTURES.com

Meiji era objects included in the exhibition's Introduction case

From Beyond the Stars:

Innovation and Inspiration in Meiji Japanese Art, 1868-1912

The Kruizenga Art Museum
at Hope College, in collaboration with
WorldBridge Art, Inc.

Catalog entries by Charles Mason and
Madeleine Zimmerman (Class of 2020)

Essay by Joe Earle

From a visitor to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago:

"In the not-too-distant future when we receive visitors from the planet Mars to our international exhibitions, their objects will probably resemble quite closely the objects that can now be seen at our present Chicago show, coming from the Empire of Japan. The European or American who comes to admire the display immediately recognizes something startlingly new—something that seems to have reached us from beyond the stars."

Introduction

The Meiji period (1868-1912) was a time of tremendous innovation and change in Japanese art. Nearly every genre of art was transformed by the introduction of new materials, techniques, forms, and designs. Some of the changes in Meiji art were prompted by shifting tastes and demands within Japan's domestic market. Other changes came about in response to demands from overseas markets, especially in Europe and the United States. Meiji art was both a product of, and a stimulus to, the forces of modernization and globalization that swept much of the world in the late 19th century, and it remains a fascinating lens through which to view the impact of those same forces on our world today.

The term Meiji means "enlightened government." It was the reign name chosen by Emperor Mutsuhito after he and his allies ended centuries of fractured, feudal rule by military warlords and created a new, centralized government under imperial control. The Meiji political reforms were prompted in part by the expanding presence of Western nations in Asia during the second half of the 19th century. The Meiji emperor and his supporters were determined to avoid colonization and strove to build Japan into a strong, modern nation that would be respected and treated as an equal by the major Western powers. To that end, the Meiji government undertook not only political reforms, but also economic, social and cultural reforms that profoundly reshaped many aspects of Japanese life at that time.

The Meiji government saw art as a vital part of its reform efforts. Art has the power to shape thought and behavior and can influence how people perceive and interact with the world. The Meiji government recognized that art could spread new ideas within Japan while simultaneously projecting a positive image of Japan among nations overseas. Japan's leaders also understood the great economic potential of art, and used art to generate revenue for the nation's modernization efforts.

This exhibition is divided into five thematic sections that give an overview of many important themes and issues in Meiji art. *From Beyond the Stars* was organized by the Kruizenga Art Museum and WorldBridge Art, Inc. of Pasadena, California. The museum is very grateful to Anthony Ghosn and WorldBridge Art, Inc. for lending many works of art and providing other critical support to the exhibition. The museum also thanks Hope College students Mason Hunt ('18) and Madeleine Zimmerman ('20) who helped research, design and write labels for the exhibition.


鐵橋

Picturing Modernity

In 1872, William Griffis, an American educator living in Japan, described the rapid changes that occurred during the early years of the Meiji reign. “Tokyo is so modernized I scarcely recognize it….Thousands wearing hats, boots, coats; carriages numerous; jin-rik-shas countless. Shops full of foreign wares and notions. Soldiers all uniformed, armed with rifles. Hospitals, schools and colleges. Railway nearly finished. Old Edo has passed away forever. Tokyo, the national capital, is a cosmopolis.”

To win international respect and elevate Japan to world-power status, Meiji political and social leaders launched a prolonged campaign to modernize their country. According to one popular slogan of the period, the government wanted Japan to project an image of “civilization and enlightenment” (*bunmei kaika*) to the rest of the world. Initially, modernization was equated with Westernization and there was a great push to adopt Western-style governance structures, financial institutions, educational models, and military and industrial technologies. Western-style architecture, clothing and transportation were enthusiastically embraced as symbols of progress, especially by the affluent classes living in Japan’s larger cities and towns. By the mid-1880s, however, some Japanese began to fear that the modernization campaigns were threatening their national heritage. People still wanted the material benefits that came from being connected to the wider world, but at the same time wanted to preserve customs and traditions that were integral to Japan’s historical identity. As a result, later Meiji modernization efforts shifted away from the wholesale adoption of foreign ideas and customs and focused more on adapting selected features of Western culture to serve Japan’s larger national goals.

Art played an important role in the Meiji modernization efforts. Many Meiji artists took pleasure in depicting new styles of buildings, clothing, and furnishings, and their images became vehicles for spreading information about the latest innovations and trends throughout Japan. Prints, paintings and photographs from the period help us understand the changing physical environment of Meiji Japan, but we must always keep in mind that these images are not unbiased portraits of life at that time. Meiji artists often infused their scenes with a good deal of imagination and wishful thinking, and some images—especially those depicting the imperial family—were reviewed by government censors to ensure that they reflected the state’s ideological objectives.

Statue of Saigo Takamori in Ueno Park
Watanabe Nobukazu (Japanese, ca. 1872-1944)
1899
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection, 2016.39.3

Established in 1873, Ueno Park in Tokyo featured gardens, ponds, plazas and a variety of buildings, including Japan's first public art museum. In 1893, the Meiji emperor commissioned Takamura Koun to sculpt a statue of Saigo Takamori for display near the southern entrance to the park. Saigo was a samurai from the Satsuma domain who played a major role in overthrowing the Tokugawa Shogun in 1868. He then served for five years in the Meiji government helping to build a new national army. In the mid-1870s, Saigo grew disenchanted with the Meiji administration and retreated to his home province where he launched a rebellion against the central authorities in 1877. The rebellion failed and Saigo committed suicide, but the political and financial effects of the revolt lingered for many years. To help restore a sense of national unity, the emperor posthumously pardoned Saigo and commissioned the sculpture depicted here, which avoids the issue of Saigo's rebellion by depicting him in civilian dress and accompanied by his dog.

The Takanawa Steam Railway
Utagawa Kuniteru (Japanese, 1830-1874)
1870
Woodblock print triptych
Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Geri Vander Molen, 2016.42.3A-C

Railways were vital to the modernization of Meiji Japan, providing more efficient transport of raw materials and manufactured goods while also fostering a stronger sense of national unity. The Takanawa Railway line ran from Tokyo to the port city of Yokohama. Opened in 1872, it was Japan’s first steam railway. This triptych offers an imaginary view of a train passing under a bridge on the Takanawa line. The print was created in 1870, shortly after plans for the railway were announced in the press. Because the railway was not yet built and the artist had never seen a real train, he modeled the locomotive and carriages on images he had seen in Western books and magazines. Although the forms are recognizable, close inspection reveals that the artist did not fully understand how trains were built and operated.


高輪鉄道蒸気車之図

Nobility Enjoying the Summer Cool
Toyohara Chikanobu
(Japanese, 1838-1912)
1887
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection,
2016.34.1A-C

The imperial family was an important arbiter of taste during the Meiji period and their behaviors were emulated by many of their subjects. This print depicts the Meiji emperor and empress relaxing in the gardens of the imperial palace, which displays an eclectic mix of Japanese and Western architectural features. The emperor wears a Western-style military uniform and sits resplendently on a scarlet and gold upholstered chair imported from Europe. The empress and her lady-in-waiting stand beside him wearing Western-style bustle dresses and hats. Before 1887, the women of the imperial household were typically portrayed wearing traditional Japanese-style clothes. This print is among the earliest images to show them wearing Western clothes, and by doing so it made wearing Western dress more acceptable for thousands of other women throughout Japan in the late Meiji period.

First Mitsui Bank Building
Utagawa Hiroshige III (Japanese, 1842-1994)
Ca. 1872
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection, 2016.42.4A-C

Located in the heart of the business district of Tokyo, the First National Bank of Japan was a symbol of the country's yearning for higher productivity. The pseudo-Western structure was designed by Shimizu Kisuke II with help from R.P. Bridgens, an American architect, and was completed in 1872. The five-story wooden building featured a traditional Edo-style frame, but a modern Western-style exterior, with bronze columns, stone facing, and an elaborate two-story balcony. The Mitsui family, a major financial backer of the Meiji government, was sanctioned by the government to construct a bank after adopting a European-style banking system. However, the government changed its policy in 1871 following the decision to model the country's banking system after national banks in the United States. They canceled the contract with the Mitsui family and appropriated the building as the First National Bank. [Madeleine Zimmerman '20]


高サ拾二丈余
間口拾五間
奥行弐拾八間余
東京三井組ハウス五階之圖


RESTAURANT BILLIARD, ET DÉPOT
DES VINS, BIÈRES ET AUTRES LIQUEURS
AZUMATEI
Nos 60 AMICHO SICHOME


牛乳
吾妻亭
西洋御料

Azuma Restaurant
Yasuji Inoue (Japanese, 1864-1889)
1888
Woodblock print triptych
Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Geri Vander Molen, 2016.31.1A-C

The Asakusa neighborhood was one of Tokyo’s most popular entertainment districts during the Meiji period, full of restaurants, teahouses, and theaters. It was a cosmopolitan area where both Japanese and foreign pleasure-seekers intermingled. In 1887, the wooden Azuma Bridge, which crossed the Sumida River at Asakusa, was replaced by Japan’s first steel-truss bridge. The new Azuma Bridge immediately became a famous landmark and a symbol of modern Tokyo. This triptych depicts a restaurant located near the Azuma Bridge that catered to a broad international clientele, as is evident from the mix of Japanese, Chinese and European figures seen on the street outside the restaurant. The restaurant’s French-language sign gives the scene an exotic flair, as does the image of a man riding a high-wheel bicycle, a recent invention that was all the rage in cities around the world during the 1880s.


奉迎會
東京

Citizens Greeting the Carriage of His Imperial Majesty and Commander-in-Chief
Ogata Gekko (Japanese, 1859-1920)
1895
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection, 2016.31.6A-C

This print depicts an imperial procession approaching the Hibiya Arch, a monumental structure built near the imperial palace in Tokyo to commemorate Japan's triumph in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95. Prior to the Meiji period, Japanese emperors had rarely ventured outside of their palaces and were almost never seen by ordinary citizens. The Meiji emperor, by contrast, appeared frequently at public events and sought to project an image of himself as a modern monarch who cared deeply about his people. The Meiji emperor's more visible public persona inspired great devotion in his subjects and helped fuel a fervent nationalism in Japan that persisted through the first half of the 20th century. By portraying the imperial procession from a vantage point within the crowd, the artist makes us spectators and encourages us to imagine all the colors, noise and excitement of the event.

Enrich the Country, Strengthen the Military

The ultimate goal of the Meiji government's modernization efforts was to transform Japan into a global economic and military power. The government reminded citizens of this objective by promulgating the slogan "enrich the country, strengthen the military" (*fukoku kyohei*).

To enrich the country, the Meiji government rationalized agricultural production, while encouraging manufacturing and trade. Old feudal land contracts were abolished and farmers were permitted to buy land and grow crops of their own choice. The tax system was restructured so that farmers no longer paid taxes in kind using a portion of their annual harvest, but instead switched to cash payments based on a fixed percentage of their land's value. The government used revenue from land taxes to build modern factories and mining operations, which were then sold to private companies to operate. Those factories and mines generated still more tax revenues and allowed Japan to build an industrial economy that was competitive with many Western economies by the turn of the 20th century.

To strengthen the military, the Meiji government created a new conscript army with the emperor as its notional commander in chief. The new army sent officers overseas to learn the latest battle tactics and invested heavily in procuring modern weapons. As befit an island nation, the Meiji government also built a modern navy with battleships, torpedo boats and other craft that could challenge the might of the Western powers on the high seas. Japan's new capabilities were put to the test in 1894-95 and 1904-05 during brief wars with China and Russia. Japan emerged victorious in both wars and was soon recognized around the world as the most potent military force in Asia.

Much of the machinery and technology needed to build Meiji Japan's industrial economy and modern military was imported from Europe and the United States. To balance the imports, Japan needed export goods to sell in overseas markets. For much of the Meiji period, Japan's chief exports included silk, copper, tea and, somewhat surprisingly, art. Between 1870 and 1890, art accounted for approximately ten percent of Japan's total exports by value. The profits that were earned by selling art overseas provided vital funds that helped Meiji Japan transform into a global superpower.


大日本物産圖會
紀伊國蜜柑山畑之圖

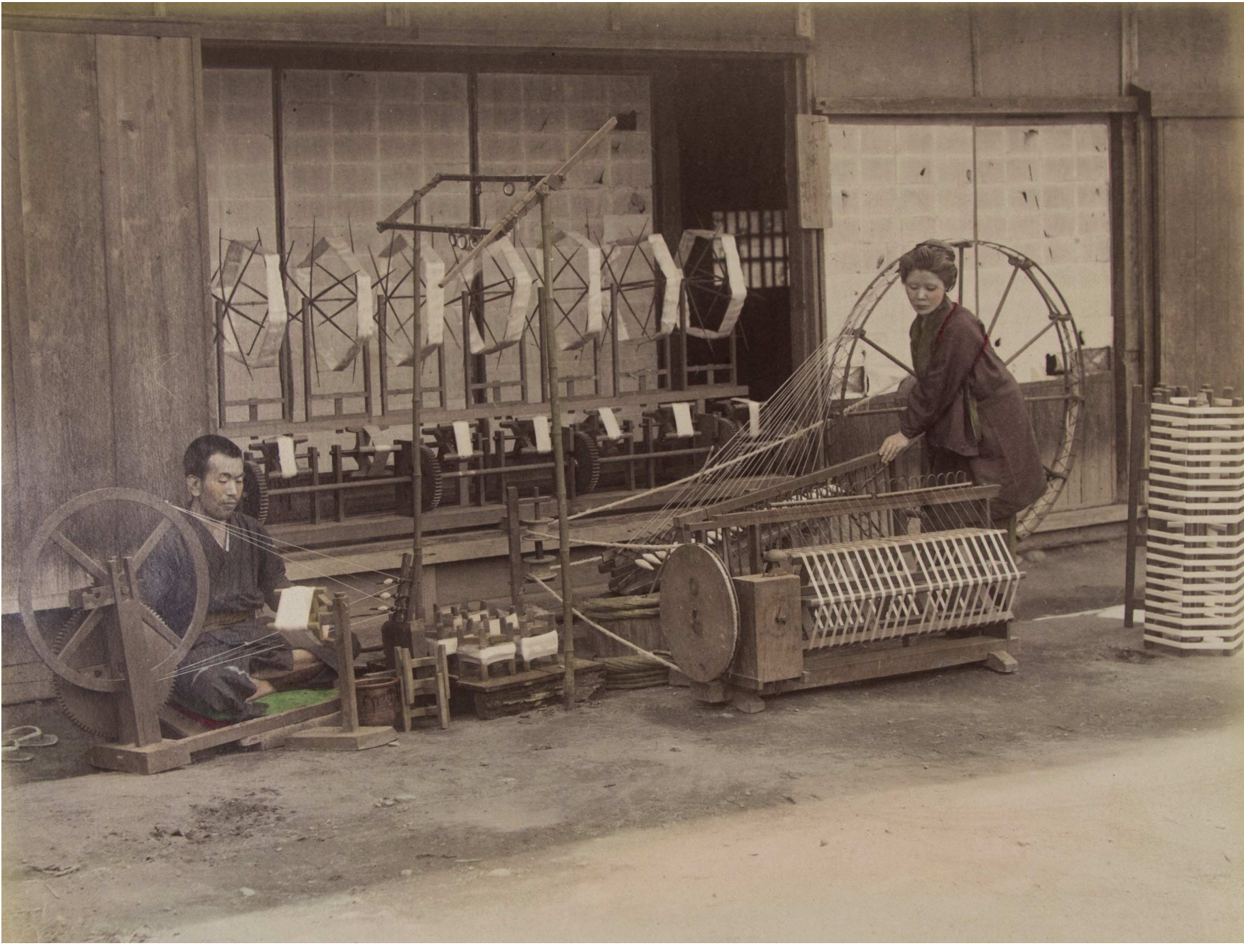

大日本物産圖會
三河國名倉砥切出圖
八名郡名倉といふ地より
切出しは故に名倉砥の名
あり山中砥石の苗を遂
深く堀入四角に長く切
出して四本づゝ馬に付
て里にいづる青白砥石
とあり薄黒く斑あり
てしかも質滑なり刀剣剃
刀等に用ひ又合砥に用ゆ
画工 大鋸町四番地 安藤徳兵衛
出版人 日本橋通一丁目九番地 大倉孫兵衛

Facing page:
Spinning Silk
Japanese
Ca. 1890s
Hand-tinted albumen print
Hope College Collection, 2016.60.5A

Silk production was a major industry in Meiji Japan. The early years of the Meiji period coincided with temporary declines in the Chinese and European silk industries, which enabled Japanese factories to capture a greater share of the international market. Continued investment in new spinning and weaving machines allowed Japan's silk manufacturers to grow steadily throughout the Meiji period until finally, in 1909, Japan became the world's largest silk producer. This photograph depicts various machines used for spinning silk thread, ranging from a relatively simple single-wheel spinner to a more complex multi-creel machine. After being spun on these types of machines, the silk thread was sold to other factories where it was woven on mechanical looms into different types of silk fabric.

Previous pages:
Orange Groves in Kii Province
Mining Nagura Stone
Utagawa Hiroshige III (Japanese, 1842-1994)
1877
Woodblock prints
Hope College Collection, 2016.37.1-2

Japan's first National Industrial Exposition, held in Tokyo's Ueno Park in 1877, was one of five industrial expositions held between 1877 and 1903 to help promote the development of domestic industries. Utagawa Hiroshige III was commissioned by publisher Okura Magobei to create a series of prints highlighting the economic activity of the 58 provinces of Japan. The series was titled *The Products of Greater Japan* (Dai Nippon Bussan Zue), and suggested both the variety and commonality of the developing nation. It is highly unlikely that Hiroshige traveled to each place that he depicted; he may have instead borrowed scenes from older images. The first print shows workers harvesting mandarin oranges in a terraced grove in Kii Province, which has been a major orange growing area for centuries. The second print shows workers in Mikawa Province quarrying nagura stone, a type of whetstone used to hone and sharpen the edges of steel tools. [Madeleine Zimmerman '20]



Vase with Garden Design
Jomi Eisuke II (Japanese, 1839-1899)
Late 19th century
Bronze, copper, silver, gold, shibuichi
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, MM007

Copper ranked high among Japan's most valuable economic commodities during the Meiji period. With help from Western-trained geologists and engineers, copper mining expanded rapidly in Japan during the late 19th century and the new mines produced great quantities of copper, both for domestic use and for export. The abundance of copper helps explain the proliferation of bronze in Meiji Japanese art. Bronze is an alloy of copper, tin and trace amounts of other metals. Japanese craftsmen had used bronze for centuries to make both functional and decorative objects, but the quantity and complexity of Japanese bronze work increased exponentially during the Meiji period. This vase bears the mark of a famous Kyoto metalsmith named Jomi Eisuke II whose workshop employed around 85 artists at its peak in the 1880s and 1890s. As is common on Meiji bronze work, the vase features a pictorial design picked out with highlights of gold, copper, silver and a copper-silver alloy called shibuichi. Japanese bronze work was much admired by Western collectors and formed a significant part of Japan's export art trade during the Meiji period.

Monkey Family
Japanese
Late 19th century
Silk embroidery on silk ground
Hope College Collection, 2016.33.1

In 1882, British architect and designer George Audsley wrote: “The embroiderers of Japan have for centuries held an unrivalled position in their art, surpassing those of all other nations in the combination of richness of fancy, beauty of coloring and skill in manipulation.” Given the pivotal importance of silk in the Meiji economy, it is no surprise that silk textiles occupied a significant place in Meiji art. The finest silk embroideries were produced by workshops in and around the city of Kyoto. They were often sold through department stores, both in Japan and in the West. This embroidered picture of a macaque monkey family derives from traditional Japanese Shijo-school painting, which favored realistic scenes of plants and animals based on close observation of nature.

Japanese Warships Fire on the Enemy Near Haiyang Island
Mizuno Toshikata (Japanese, 1866-1908)
1894
Woodblock print triptych
Purchased with funds provided by Ronald ’62 and Geri Vander Molen, 2016.58.4A-C

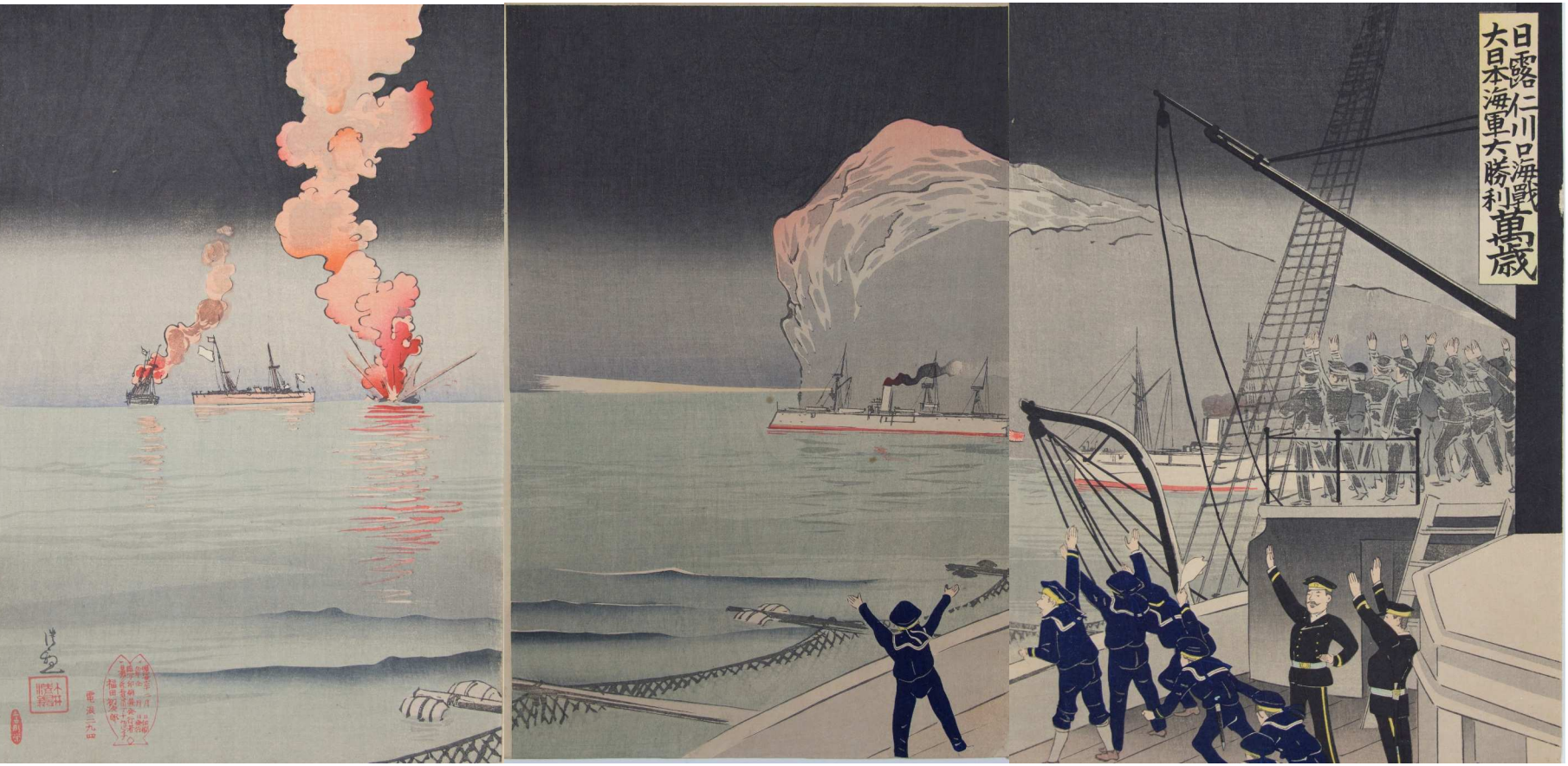
In September 1894, Japan went to war with China over control of Korea. Since the middle of the 17th century, Korea had enjoyed close economic, political and cultural ties to China. The Meiji government resented those ties and wanted to advance its own interests in Korea, which was rich in natural resources that the Japanese coveted for their growing economy. Tensions came to a head in June, 1894 when a pro-Japanese faction of Korea’s government seized power and invited Japan to expel Chinese military forces from the country. War was declared and the first major battles were fought on land near the city of Pyongyang and at sea near Haiyang Island off the coast of Korea. China’s military was larger than Japan’s, but the Japanese forces were better trained and better equipped. The power of Japan’s modern armed forces is evident in this print showing a naval gunnery crew in action during the Battle of the Yellow Sea. The war between Japan and China lasted for seven months until the Treaty of Shimonoseki finally brought hostilities to an end in April, 1895. Japan was declared the victor and won a large reparation payment from the Chinese government, as well as functional control over Korea and the Chinese province of Taiwan.

The Assault on Lushunkou
Mitsukata (Japanese, active late 19th century)
1894
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection, 2015.67A-C

Lushunkou, also called Port Arthur by Westerners during the Meiji period, was a strategic port city at the tip of the Liaodong peninsula in what is now China's Liaoning province. Chinese forces retreating from Korea during the Sino-Japanese War made a defensive stand at Lushunkou, but were quickly overwhelmed by the Japanese military's combined land and sea assault. This print depicts fighting between Chinese soldiers and Japanese soldiers of the First Army lead by General Oyama Iwao, who appears in the central panel leading the charge on horseback. The Japanese government commissioned thousands of prints during the Sino-Japanese War to celebrate its victories and build patriotic support for the war within Japan. As here, the prints typically portray the Japanese soldiers as well-trained, modern warriors while the Chinese are usually portrayed as inept fighters with outdated weapons and uniforms. After the Battle of Lushunkou, the Japanese army massacred thousands of surrendered Chinese soldiers and civilians in retribution after the bodies of several fallen Japanese soldiers were discovered to have been mutilated.


天山大將


金州之戰及ビ旅順口攻撃之圖
山路氏
光方畫


日露仁川口海戰
大日本海軍大勝利萬歲

Naval Battle at Inchon: The Great Victory of the Japanese Navy
Kobayashi Kiyochika (Japanese, 1847-1915)
1904
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection, 2016.51A-C

After being defeated by Japan in the war of 1894-95, China allowed Russia to build a naval base at Lushunkou on the southern tip of the Liaodong peninsula. China hoped that the Russian presence would deter further aggression by Japan, while the Russians were happy to obtain a warm-water port for their growing Pacific fleet. Japan saw Russia's presence in China as a threat to its regional interests and tensions between the two countries escalated. Finally, in February, 1904, Japanese and Russian naval forces clashed in a battle off the coast of Inchon, Korea and war was declared. As a major European power, Russia was expected to defeat Japan easily, but instead it suffered a long string of losses both at sea and on land. The Russo-Japanese War came to an end in September, 1905 when both sides signed the Treaty of Portsmouth, which was negotiated by United States President Theodore Roosevelt. Although Japan won the war against Russia, the victory came at a great cost in terms of lives and resources and many Japanese were disappointed that the war did not result in any significant territorial gains or reparation payments for their country.


我第二軍金州城總攻擊
大日本帝國大勝利萬歲
The great victory of Japanese second army in the battle of Kinchoo.
日露戰爭各國將校視察之圖

The Great Victory of the Japanese Second Army at Kinchoo
Japanese, artist not identified
1904
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection, 2016.58.3A-B

Kinchoo is an old Westernized spelling for Jinzhou, a walled city in Manchuria where Japanese and Russian forces clashed in May, 1904. The fighting at Jinzhou was part of the larger Battle of Nanshan, in which the Japanese Second Army under the command of General Yasukata Oku used artillery barrages and infantry charges to defeat a Russian force protected by trenches, barbed wire and machine guns. The fighting at Jinzhou and Nanshan was unexpectedly savage and proved to be a precursor to the horrors of World War One. The use of English in the title cartouche of this print is unusual and suggests that it may have been made partly with a foreign audience in mind. The Meiji government cultivated Great Britain as an unofficial ally during the Russo-Japanese war and used intelligence supplied by the British in planning its battle strategies.

Imperial Presentation Bowl with Chrysanthemum Motifs
Hirata Shigemitsu (Japanese, 1855-1926)
Early 20th century
Silver
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, S005

Hirata Shigemitsu was a Tokyo silversmith who produced a broad range of both functional and decorative wares. This large bowl is decorated with a design of chrysanthemum blossoms, a flower traditionally associated with the imperial family in Japan. The stylized chrysanthemum crest that appears on the sides of the bowl indicates that the bowl was commissioned by the imperial family, most likely as a gift for a domestic supporter or foreign ally. Giving expensive gifts demonstrated the magnanimity of the imperial household and was part of its effort to project an image of Japan as a strong, wealthy nation.

Making Meiji Art

Most Meiji works of art were made in relatively small workshops. Located primarily in urban areas, these workshops were typically headed by a master who oversaw anywhere from a few to a few dozen apprentices. In some workshops, the master himself made much of the art while the apprentices functioned largely in supporting roles. In other workshops, the apprentices made much of the art with the master acting more as chief designer and quality control supervisor. Most Meiji artists were men, but women also played significant roles in some types of art production, especially textile weaving and ceramic decoration. Meiji art tended to be highly labor-intensive, and artists routinely worked long hours with few days off on painstaking projects that could take weeks, months or even years to complete.

Meiji artists usually worked to order, fulfilling commissions from retail merchants, government agencies and individual clients. Because it was difficult for many small art workshops to find enough buyers for their goods, trading companies emerged to distribute the art to markets across Japan and around the world. Although commerce was the chief concern of these trading companies, they also functioned as clearing houses for new ideas, techniques and fashions and provided guidance to the artists on forms, designs and materials that were popular with buyers in different areas. In this way, the trading companies became important catalysts for much of the innovation and change that occurred in Meiji Japanese art.

The labor intensive nature of Meiji art meant that most of it could not be easily mass produced, but new technologies imported from Europe did allow for the industrial-scale manufacture of two art forms in particular, ceramics and textiles. At first, these factory-made goods were intricately designed and carefully manufactured so that they resembled small-workshop handicrafts. But when consumer demand increased, many Meiji factories shifted to a higher volume, lower price production model and the quality of their goods declined accordingly. Some trading companies also began pushing less expensive, less carefully-crafted versions of studio arts like lacquer, cloisonné and bronze, which allowed those arts to reach more consumers than ever before but diminished their vitality and originality at the same time.

Vase with Landscape Paintings
Kinkozan Studios, signed Sozan
Late 19th century
Glazed earthenware, enamels, gilding
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, C011

This vase is a type of ceramic known as Satsuma ware. Satsuma ware originated in Satsuma prefecture on the southern island of Kyushu in the early 19th century and is distinguished by a white earthenware body that is covered with a creamy crackle glaze and lavishly decorated with colored enamels and gilding. The Satsuma style became extremely popular with Western buyers during the 1870s and 80s, and was soon being produced by numerous workshops operating in different cities around Japan. This vase was made by the Kinkozan workshop in Kyoto. Kinkozan ceramics were marketed primarily in Europe and America, where collectors were awed by their elaborate decoration. The images in the two cartouches on the sides of the vase were painted by an artist named Sozan, about whom little is known, but who must have been an artist of some stature to have his name included next to the factory mark on the bottom of the vase.

The Cloisonné Studio of Namikawa Yasuyuki
Underwood and Underwood Publishers
1904
Stereoview photograph
Hope College Collection, 2016.59

These stereoview photographs offer a rare glimpse into the workshop of a well-known Meiji artist. Namikawa Yasuyuki was among the most famous cloisonné artists of the Meiji period. Active in the city of Kyoto, Namikawa developed a national and international reputation for his intricate wirework and lyrical designs. These photographs show Namikawa overseeing some of the dozen or so artisans who worked in his studio executing his designs. Like many Meiji artworks, all of Namikawa's cloisonné was made by hand in small batches. By working diligently year round, Namikawa's studio produced large quantities of cloisonné that was marketed at national and international exhibitions and sold through department stores and specialty galleries in Japan, Europe and the United States.

(69) Expert workmen creating exquisite designs in cloisonné (Mr. Namikawa in background), Kyoto, Japan.

Ovoid Vase with Dragon Motif
Ovoid Vase with Butterfly Motif
Namikawa Yasuyuki (Japanese, 1845-1927)
Early 20th century
Copper, silver, enamels
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, E011 and E075

Cloisonné is made by affixing thin metal wires (*cloisons*) to a metal object to create a decorative design. The spaces between the wires are filled with powdered enamels made of crushed glass mixed with other substances to help the glass melt. The object is then placed in a kiln to melt the enamels and adhere them to the metal. Depending on the complexity of the design and the thickness of the enamels, one piece might be fired multiple times to achieve a smooth, level surface and large, complex pieces could take months or even years to complete. Cloisonné originated in Europe and was brought to China sometime around the 14th century. Japanese artists did not begin making cloisonné on any significant scale until the middle of the 19th century, but the art developed rapidly during the Meiji period and achieved heights of technical brilliance that have never been equaled.

Vase with Chrysanthemums and Birds
Hayashi Tanigoro (Japanese, active c. 1895-1935)
Early 20th century
Copper, silver wire, enamels
Gift of Jeffrey and Juli Adelman, selected from the Ghosn Family Art Collection and WorldBridge Art, Inc., 2013.6.1

Square Vase with Hydrangea Design
Hayashi Kodenji (Japanese, 1831-1915)
Early 20th century
Copper, silver, enamels
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, E079

Hayashi Tanigoro and Hayashi Kodenji were both members of an extended family of cloisonné artists that was active in the city of Nagoya during the Meiji period. The Hayashi lineage traced its roots back to an artist named Hayashi Shogoro, who was one of the first Japanese cloisonné makers to create works in a distinctively Japanese rather than Chinese style. Hayashi Kodenji helped advance Japanese cloisonné still further in the late 1870s when he collaborated with a German chemist living in Japan named Gottfried Wagener to develop new recipes for cloisonné enamels. Kodenji's workshop gained national and international recognition during the 1880s and 90s, winning numerous awards and medals at various exhibitions and world's fairs.

Censer with Foliage Design
Attributed to Kawade Shibetaro (Japanese, 1856-1921)
Early 20th century
Copper, silver, enamels
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, E018

Kawade Shibetaro began working as a cloisonné enameler in Nagoya around 1870, while he was still a teenager. He worked for several famous workshops over the course of his career including the Ando Company, where he served as chief designer from 1900 to 1910. Kawade is best known for developing an innovative style of cloisonné with flowing enamels that resemble ceramic glazes.

Bowl with Bamboo Design
Japanese, Koransha Factory
Late 19th century
Glazed porcelain, enamels, gilding
Hope College Collection, 2016.45

Imari is a style of porcelain named after the Japanese port from which it was shipped to the West from the 17th century onward. It experienced a revival in the 19th century with World Expositions helping to create new markets for Japanese potters. The Koransha Company was one of the large urban ceramic manufactories that were increasingly replacing rural workshops during the Meiji period. Eizaemon Fukagawa VIII, the company's founder, traveled around Europe in the late 1870s, visiting several major ceramic production sites and taking note of the newest manufacturing processes before purchasing manufacturing equipment in France and bringing it back to Japan. Most of the Koransha Company's pieces, like this bowl, were made for the export market. The outside of the bowl features three different applications of a bamboo stencil: one in underglaze blue, one in overglaze green enamel, and one in overglaze gold. The use of stencils helped to speed up the ceramic manufacturing process, while also standardizing the execution of the designs. [Madeleine Zimmerman '20]

Formal Waist Sash with Landscape Design
Japanese, Nishijin Trading Company
Late 19th- early 20th century
Silk brocade
Hope College Collection, 2016.43

This double-sided waist sash (*maru obi*) would have been worn by a woman as part of a formal dress ensemble. The sash was made in the Nishijin weaving district of Kyoto. Nishijin weavers first began producing luxury textiles for the imperial court and wealthy samurai families in the 16th century. A weak economy caused the Nishijin weaving industry to contract during the first half of the 19th century, and when the imperial court moved to Tokyo in the early Meiji period, many Nishijin textile producers faced total ruin. Nishijin was saved by three weavers who traveled to France in the 1870s to study European textile production. Among the new technologies they brought back was the mechanized Jacquard loom, a French invention that used punch-card technology to control complex weaving patterns. The Jacquard loom allowed Nishijin weavers to weave greater quantities of textiles more quickly than ever before. The new abundance and variety of Nishijin textiles attracted the interest of both domestic and foreign buyers and by the end of the 19th century the industry was flourishing again.

Box with Foliage Design
Uono Jisei (Japanese, 1883-after 1941), Ca. 1910s
Wood, lacquer, mother-of-pearl
Hope College Collection, 2015.50.2A-B

Asian lacquer is derived from the sap of the tree *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*. When the sap is refined and applied in thin coats to objects made of wood, leather or cloth, it creates a highly durable surface that protects the objects against damage from acid, hot temperatures, damp rot and insects. Lacquer can be processed to produce different colors and levels of gloss, creating aesthetic possibilities that artists in Asia have been exploring for more than two thousand years. During the Meiji period, Japanese artists developed a new pictorial style of lacquer that was influenced by European Art Nouveau. The new style typically featured natural motifs drawn in a stylized manner using a limited palette of colors. This accessory box was created by Uono Jisei, a Kyoto lacquer artist who helped advance the new Meiji style in the 1910s and 20s.

Crane's Egg Box

Kanagawa Masaaki (Japanese, active late 19th century), 1880s

Iron, gold, silver, shibuichi

Loan from WorldBridge Partners, MM017

This box was made by beating a thin sheet of iron into an egg-shaped form and decorating the surface with a design of cranes in a landscape picked out in gold, silver and a copper-silver alloy called shibuichi. The techniques used to create this kind of "mixed metal" piece originated with the armorers who had served the samurai class prior to the Meiji period. After the samurai class was abolished in the 1870s, many traditional metal smiths were hired by trading companies to create works of art for the retail market, both in Japan and overseas. The box was probably intended to be decorative rather than functional. In Japanese legend, cranes were auspicious birds that could live for hundreds of years, so the box symbolically conveys a wish for good fortune and longevity.

Why Is Meiji-Era Decorative Art Still Relevant Today?

Whenever people visit a large American art museum aspiring to some degree of “universality,” they are almost certain to see historic hand-made objects from around the world that would be impossible to replicate today. Some of these objects will be thousands of years old, but a few will have been produced as recently as the time of our great- or great-great-grandparents. In almost every case, rapid social and technological change, coupled with loss of traditional markets, will have since severed a golden chain of manual skills passed on by master to apprentice over the generations, not merely by spoken and written explanation, but by patient, repeated showing and copying.

This is as true for contemporary Japan as it is for other countries all over the world, but Japan in the Meiji era (1868–1912), which started only 150 years ago, offers a rare, perhaps a unique instance of a nation that made deliberate and successful efforts to preserve that golden chain and to halt and even reverse the decline of pre-modern hand-craft industries in the face of modernization. These efforts started early in Meiji. From 1871 to 1873, a great diplomatic and fact-finding mission led by the bureaucrat Iwakura Tomomi toured the globe, concluding with a visit to the World Exposition in Vienna. Iwakura’s delegation admired the massed displays of products of the Industrial Revolution, but they were also pleased to discover that the carefully selected goods the Japanese authorities had earlier shipped to the Austrian capital were widely admired.

Government bureaucrats subsequently encouraged artists in ceramic, lacquer, silk, metalwork, and enamel to exhibit their wares at later international expositions held in Philadelphia, Paris, Chicago, St. Louis, London, and elsewhere. The Japanese pieces displayed at these huge, global events—the physical websites of their age—both attracted extravagant praise and earned significant foreign exchange at a time when the country was not ready to compete in the global market for machine-made goods.

Thanks to secure state patronage, sometimes conducted in the name of the emperor, and the emergence of a new class of entrepreneurs who sold Japanese goods to foreign visitors or in foreign countries, something remarkable happened: far from falling into decline, many of Japan’s traditional elite manufacturing industries enjoyed a renaissance. In the special case of cloisonné enamels, which feature prominently in this exhibition, a whole new craft was brought from crude beginnings to unparalleled perfection in the space of half a century.

This successful revival of quality hand-manufacturing at the very same time that Japan was experiencing headlong industrialization is enough to warrant continuing interest and study in the art of the Meiji era. Equally fascinating, however, are the strategies that underpinned this revival.

Here it is important to draw a distinction between painting on the one hand and, on the other hand, the kind of artifacts described by the terms “decorative art,” “craft,” or the Japanese Meiji-era coinage *kōgei*. During the last century of the Edo period (1615–1868), which preceded the Meiji era, the world of painting, but not so much that of the crafts, was driven by a mass of overlapping conflicts that were reflected in society at large. Should Japan accept or reject external, Western influences? Should the shogun or the emperor hold supreme political power? To what degree should Chinese influences be welcomed or resisted? Should the native Shinto religion be given priority over the imported but all-pervasive Buddhist religion?

Painters and other intellectuals agonized over the implications of these burning issues well into and past the Meiji era, and contrasting efforts to resolve them did much to shape the look of Japanese pictorial art until the mid-twentieth century. The case with “decorative arts,” “crafts,” or *kōgei* was very different. Emphasizing not individual self-expression but wealth-creation and the preservation of employment, the “movers and shakers” of the craft world quickly and cleverly realized that in order to survive and thrive they would need to look beyond difficult issues of national identity in favor of a warm and welcoming, but savvy, response to non-Japanese taste.

It is amazing how quickly Japanese metalworkers, enamelers, and ceramic artists picked and adapted styles and motifs from the vast heritage of East Asian art and decoration at their disposal, using them to build bridges toward clients across the world, people they would mostly never meet but whose tastes they accurately gauged. Thanks to recent scholarship inside and outside Japan, we now have a good grasp of some of the technical advances that helped bring this about.

The next step is to try to get a better understanding of the design choices and strategies that contributed to the triumphant success of Meiji-era decorative art. The resplendent objects presented in this exhibition, here in Holland, Michigan on the Hope College Campus at The Kruizenga Art Museum, offer rich materials for the pursuit of this fascinating future field of enquiry.

Joe Earle

Joe Earle was Director of Japan Society Gallery in New York until October 2012 and has held leadership positions in Asian art de-partments at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Over the past 36 years he has organized more than two dozen exhibitions in Britain, Japan, Italy, and the United States. Additionwritten, translated, or edited books and catalogs on many aspects of Japanese culture ranging from contemporary art and design through samurai sword-fittings to flower arrangement, bronzes, and lacquered medicine cases. He is now based in London, working as an independent arts consultant. Current projects include a catalogue and book on Japanese baskets of the past 150, years as well as ongoing work on twentieth-century painting, and Meiji and later decorative arts.

Domestic and Foreign Markets

As part of its effort to “encourage manufacturing and promote industry” (*shokusan kogyo*), the Japanese government organized five national trade exhibitions during the Meiji period. The first three national exhibitions (1877, 1881 and 1890) were held in Tokyo, while the last two exhibitions (1895 and 1903) were held in Kyoto and Osaka respectively. Products from all over Japan were displayed at these exhibitions in six different categories: mining and metallurgy, manufactured goods, art, machinery, agriculture, and horticulture. Government officials judged the entries in each category and awarded prizes for quality and innovation. The national exhibitions provided an important stimulus to the development of Meiji art, offering opportunities for artists to share design ideas and production techniques while helping them find buyers for their work. In an era before museums were common in Japan, the exhibitions also exposed the general public to the latest developments in art and strengthened the role of art in shaping national culture.

Beyond Japan, the Meiji government also sponsored the participation of Japanese manufacturers and trading companies in many world’s fairs and international expositions. Japanese goods—including works of art—were featured at all of the major world fairs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), Amsterdam (1883), Chicago (1893), Paris (1900), St. Louis (1904), and San Francisco (1915). The Meiji government viewed these fairs as important commercial opportunities, where Japanese manufacturers could cultivate foreign buyers while learning about new materials and production methods. The government further viewed the fairs as strategic propaganda opportunities that could be used to project an image of Japan as a strong, wealthy, industrious nation. The arts were especially important in this national image-building effort and the Japanese pavilions at the fairs were filled with intricately crafted art objects that exemplified the ingenuity, capacity for hard work, and refined aesthetic sensibilities that Japan wanted Western countries to recognize and appreciate.

Early in the Meiji period, works of art made for the domestic market were often quite distinct from those made for the export market. By the turn of the 20th century, however, the boundaries between domestic and export art had begun to blur, and numerous artists emerged whose work appealed to consumer tastes, both within Japan and overseas.

Imperial Ladies Visit the Second National Industrial Exhibition

Toyohara Chikanobu (Japanese, 1838-1912)

1881

Woodblock print triptych

Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Geri Vander Molen,

2016.39.1A-C

The Second National Industrial Exhibition was held in Tokyo’s Ueno Park from March through June, 1881. The event attracted more than 820,000 visitors during its four-month run and provided important stimulus to Japan’s economy, which was still struggling from the after-effects of the 1877 Kagoshima Rebellion. The main exhibition hall was a Western-style brick building designed by the British architect Josiah Conder. In front of the exhibition hall was a grand fountain designed by the famous ceramic artist Makuzu Kozan featuring four mythical sea creatures supporting a large urn. The Shojo Fountain, as it was called, became a popular landmark and was one of the attractions viewed by the imperial family when they visited the fair shortly after it opened.


官女名器鑑図
楊洲周延筆

Imperial Ladies View Art at the Second National Industrial Exhibition
Toyohara Chikanobu (Japanese, 1838-1912)
1881
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection,
2016.61

Unlike the First National Industrial Exhibition in 1877 where products had been displayed according to their prefecture of origin, products at the Second National Industrial Exhibition were displayed by category. Works of art were exhibited in mass displays, with different genres of art mixed together to create grand visual tableaux. When the imperial family visited the exhibition, people watched closely to see which works caught their attention. Any sign of imperial favor or approval could help boost an artist's reputation (and sales) tremendously.

The Imperial Family Visits the Third National Industrial Exhibition

Eisai Shigekiyo (Japanese, active late 19th century)

1890

Woodblock print triptych

Purchased with funds donated by Shirley Vander Molen in honor of her brother-in-law Ronald Vander Molen ‘62, 2015.69A-C

The Third National Industrial Exhibition in 1890 was Japan’s largest domestic trade fair to date. The grand scale of the exhibition was intended to prove that Japan was capable of hosting a world’s fair, but unfortunately poor weather and a virulent influenza outbreak kept many visitors away and the exhibition failed to live up to its attendance targets. Still, the exhibition provided useful stimulus to Japan’s domestic economy and was a good test run for Japan’s participation in the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. This print depicts women from the imperial household arriving outside the exhibition site in Ueno Park. Whereas images of the imperial women visiting the Second National Industrial Exhibition showed them wearing traditional Japanese dress, this image shows them wearing fashionable Western-style clothing.


第三回内國勧業博覧會


第三回内國勧業博覧會行幸之圖

Dish with Ikebana Flower Basket Design
Japanese
Late 19th century
Wood, lacquer
Gift of Chris and Risa Engle in honor of Maiya and Leah, 2016.32.41.1-6

This dish, decorated with an ikebana flower basket, illustrates the type of product that was exhibited at the various national industrial exhibitions during the Meiji period. Ikebana flower arranging has ancient roots in Japan. Brought from China in the 11th or 12th century, it was transformed in Japan and gradually developed into multiple different schools. Most traditional ikebana schools emphasized the creation of upright displays using long-stemmed flowers, grasses and tree branches as the central elements. During the Meiji period, a new style of ikebana evolved in which short-stemmed flowers were arranged in shallow bowls and baskets to create more horizontal displays. The new style was formalized by flower master Ohara Unshin and became the primary style of the so-called Ohara School of ikebana in 1895.

Crows on a Branch
Manner of Kawanabe Kyosai (Japanese, 1831-1889)
Late 19th century
Ink on paper
Gift of Chris and Risa Engle in honor of Maiya and Leah, 2016.32.58

Kawanabe Kyosai was born a samurai, but began training as an artist while still a boy. Kyosai first gained fame for his satirical caricatures of historical and contemporary figures, which were irreverent enough to get him arrested and jailed three times by Tokugawa and Meiji authorities in the 1860s and early 1870s. After firmly establishing a name for himself as an artist within Japan, Kyosai used his friendships with several Western artists and collectors to help build his reputation overseas as well. Crows were a favorite subject of Kyosai, perhaps because he appreciated their shrill calls, annoying behavior and love of mischief. As here, Kyosai often portrayed the birds with distorted bodies and exaggerated facial features that convey a strong sense of personality and intelligence.

Pine Tree in Snow
Shibata Zeshin (Japanese, 1807-1891)
Late 19th century
Ink on paper
Gift of Mrs. Juli A. Adelman and the Adelman Family in Memory of Jeffrey D. Adelman, from the WorldBridge Art Collections,
2015.21

Apprenticed to a lacquer master at age eleven, Shibata Zeshin also received instruction in painting, poetry and the Japanese tea ceremony. At age 28, Zeshin became the head of his own art studio and began a prolific career working in a wide range of materials and styles. Zeshin won international acclaim when his artwork was shown at world fairs and expositions in Vienna, Philadelphia and Paris in the 1870s and 1880s. Ever the savvy businessman, Zeshin created works that appealed to both Japanese and foreign consumers. This painting of snow-laden pine branches is very much in the Japanese taste. As evergreens, pines were symbols of hardiness and endurance in traditional Japanese culture and were appreciated for their simple, evocative beauty.

Censer with Samurai and Fox Spirit
Japanese, signed Shokaken
Late 19th century
Bronze
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, MM014

In traditional Japanese folklore, fox spirits (*kitsune*) are highly intelligent, magical creatures that can sometimes assume human form. The figures on the lid of this bronze incense burner may illustrate a scene from a famous Kabuki play in which a samurai named Abe no Yasuna learns that his wife Kazunoha is actually a fox spirit. Here we see the moment when she reveals her true nature to him. Although the subject matter and form of this artwork would seem to be aimed at a Japanese audience, the censer was likely made for the European and American markets, which found sculptural objects like this exotic and interesting. An inscription on the bottom of the censer says it was made by the Tokyo bronze workshop Shokaken.

Dragons and Clouds
Japanese
Late 19th century
Silk embroidery on cotton
Hope College Collection,
2016.40

As in other East Asian countries, dragons were traditionally viewed as symbols of power and strength in Japan. They were considered auspicious creatures that brought life-giving rains and protected people from injustice and oppression. This tapestry depicting seven dragons frolicking in a sea of clouds is based on older prototypes that were brought to Japan from China around the 12th or 13th century. Despite its deep historical roots, the tapestry was likely made for export. Large, showy textiles with exotic “Oriental” subjects were featured at many world’s fairs and international exhibitions and were also sold in some Western department stores and shops specializing in Asian goods.

Tea Caddy with Birds and Flowers
Yabu Meizan (Japanese, 1853-1934)
Late 19th century
Glazed earthenware, enamels, gilding
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, C012

Vase with Lake Biwa Scene
Yabu Meizan (Japanese, 1853-1934)
Ca. 1900
Glazed earthenware, enamels, gilding
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, C010

Bud Vase
Yabu Meizan (Japanese, 1853-1934)
Ca. 1910
Glazed earthenware, enamels, gilding
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, C015

Active in the city of Osaka, Yabu Meizan ran a workshop in which ceramic blanks purchased from various kilns were decorated by painters working under his name. Meizan's studio produced work in the Satsuma style and was especially famous for its elaborate, miniature designs. Meizan won numerous awards at both domestic and international exhibitions during the 1880s and 1890s and played a key role in organizing Japan's art displays at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. After the St. Louis fair, Meizan experimented with a simpler style of decoration featuring larger elements set against plain backgrounds. Intended to reconcile Japanese and Western tastes, the new style won awards at the 1910 Japan-Britain Exhibition in London but was never as commercially successful as his older, more ornately decorated pieces.

Pair of Vases with Iris Design
Namikawa Sosuke (Japanese, 1847-1910)
Early 20th century
Copper, shakudo, enamels
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, E090-091

Box with Goose and Moon
Namikawa Sosuke (Japanese, 1847-1910)
Ca. 1905
Copper, shakudo, enamels
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, E073

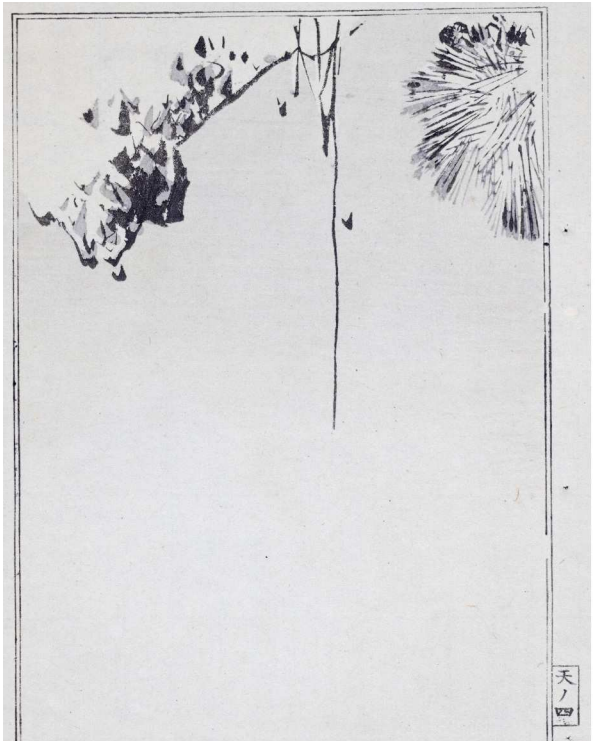
Namikawa Sosuke was a leading figure in the “Pictorial School” of Japanese cloisonné, which favored designs modeled after different schools of Japanese painting. In 1887, Sosuke assumed control of the Nagoya Cloisonné Company where he worked closely with the artist Watanabe Seitei to develop new motifs for the company’s wares. When Sosuke left Nagoya to run the company’s office in Tokyo, he appointed Seitei to replace him as head of the factory. At a time when the Meiji government typically categorized cloisonné as an industrial good, Sosuke wanted recognition as an artist and worked hard to perfect his distinctive style of decoration, raising Japanese enamels to a new level. [Madeleine Zimmerman ‘20]

Heron Plaque
Namikawa Sosuke (Japanese, 1847-1910)
Ca. 1905
Copper, shakudo, enamels
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, E044

One of the most famous cloisonné artists of the Meiji period, Namikawa Sosuke is credited with the invention of wireless cloisonné, a technique in which the wires are gradually removed during the enameling process to create a nearly seamless design. Sosuke was a master of duplicating brush-like paintings in cloisonné, as is evident in this plaque featuring an image of a heron after a painting by Watanabe Seitei. In Japanese culture, the heron is a symbol for tranquility, stability, and purity. [Madeleine Zimmerman ‘20]

Facing Page:
Tree Peony
Crows and Pine
Watanabe Seitei (Japanese, 1851-1918)
1891
Woodcuts
Hope College Collection, 2017

In 1878, Watanabe Seitei traveled to the United States and Europe and ended up spending almost three years living and studying in Paris. During his time in France, Watanabe absorbed the ideas and techniques of Western realism, including the documentary style of realism that was used in scientific illustrations. After returning to Japan, Watanabe combined elements of his Japanese and Western training to create a new, hybrid style that was at once descriptive and poetic. He built his reputation chiefly as a painter, but also created designs for woodblock prints, ceramics and cloisonné. His work was exhibited in Japan and overseas and he won several national and international art awards. These prints come from an album of bird and flower prints that Watanabe created in 1890-91, the designs from which had a huge impact on other Japanese artists working in a wide range of media.



Japanese Spirit, Western Techniques

To successfully modernize Japan while preserving its national identity, the Meiji government encouraged its citizens to find a balance between “Japanese spirit and Western techniques” (*wakon yosai*) in many areas of public and private life, including the arts.

From the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century, Japan enforced a national closed-door policy that severely restricted its interactions with other countries. As a result, at the beginning of the Meiji period Japan lagged far behind the Western world in science, math, engineering, economics and many other areas of knowledge. The Meiji government sought to close this gap by hiring foreign experts and educators to come to Japan to teach in a wide range of academic disciplines. The government also subsidized study-abroad programs for Japanese government officials, military officers, businessmen, artists and other professionals who were tasked with absorbing practical information and skills from Western countries and bringing them back to Japan. The Western knowledge that was acquired through this two-pronged strategy of importing foreign experts and sending Japanese students overseas was adapted to fit Japanese ideologies and customs, producing a new form of modernity that was distinctly Japanese.

Many Meiji-period arts were profoundly affected by the introduction of new Western technologies. Printmaking and textiles were transformed by new aniline dyes which produced vivid colors that resisted fading from exposure to light. Ceramics and cloisonné were revolutionized by the use of new coal-fired kilns along with new chemical formulas for glazes and enamels. Exposure to European notions of romanticism and realism helped bring about a transformation in Japanese sculpture, while the introduction of photography ushered in new ways of representing the world in the visual arts. Yet for all the innovations, most Meiji arts maintained strong connections to older Japanese traditions, preserving forms, subjects, and styles that stretched back many centuries. The mix of old and new, Japanese and Western, is what gave Meiji art its widespread appeal at the time and is a large part of why it continues to appeal to our globalized tastes today.


新造お米
岩井杜若助


八木豊永
助高屋高助
楊洲斎延筆

Actors in a Kabuki Love Story
Toyohara Chikanobu (Japanese, 1838-1912)
1881
Woodblock print triptych
Hope College Collection, 2016.31.4A-C

With the accidental discovery of synthetic dyes in 1856, English chemist William Henry Perkin ushered in a new chemical age. While trying to produce synthetic quinine, the only known treatment for malaria at the time, Perkin created mauve, the first aniline dye. The use of aniline dyes spread rapidly because they were bright and easy to produce, unlike dyes from natural sources, which were difficult to extract and faded quickly. Purple and red dyes were historically the most difficult and expensive colors to produce, and thus became associated with the aristocracy in both Europe and Japan. After aniline dyes made red and purple more widely available, they came to be regarded as “the colors of progress” in Japan and signified the Meiji government’s support for Western technology and innovation. This print, depicting a kabuki play set in Tokyo’s brothel district, shows off both the vividness of the dyes and their widespread use in printmaking and clothing during the Meiji period.
[Madeleine Zimmerman ‘20]

Kabuki Actors Off Stage
Toyohara Chikanobu
(Japanese, 1838-1912)
1879
Woodblock print triptych
Purchased with funds donated by Ronald ’62 and Geri Vander Molen, 2016.31.4A-C

This print illustrates how the introduction of aniline dyes and Western clothing forms impacted Japanese dress during the Meiji period. The image depicts a group of kabuki actors offstage. Most of the actors wear articles of clothing with either purple or red designs. One of the male figures in the center of the image wears a Western-style outfit, while a second man on the right wears a Western-style hat. Three of the men sport short haircuts that were another fashion trend imported from the West during the Meiji period. [Madeleine Zimmerman ‘20]

新富座
市川團十郎
岩井半四郎
市川小團次
沢村清十郎
新富座
其係季の写繪
源平布引
漂流奇譚西洋劇
守田勘弥
沢村百之助
中村仲蔵
楊洲周延筆
上野北大門丁十一番地
画工 橋本直義
本郷元冨士丁一番地
出板人 松下平兵衛

Kimono with Bamboo Design
Japanese
Early 20th century
Silk, aniline dyes
Hope College Collection, 2016.41

While Meiji prints often portrayed people wearing the latest Western fashions, in reality clothing did not change significantly for the majority of the Japanese at that time. Many government officials, fashion-conscious women, and the educated elite began wearing Western-style clothing in public, following the examples of the Emperor and Empress. At home, however, many changed back into traditional Japanese garments because Western clothing was not always suitable for Japanese living styles. The kimono was the primary garment of Japanese attire. By the Meiji era, synthetic dyes were being used widely for dyeing kimonos. Despite the often simple patterns, kimonos conveyed a complex system of messages through color, fabric, and pattern. The bamboo pattern on this man's kimono was a symbol of strength and morality. [Madeleine Zimmerman '20]

Beaker Vase
Kinkozan Studios, signed Sozan
Late 19th century
Glazed earthenware, enamels, gilding
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, C009

During the Meiji period, ceramics and chemistry became closely intertwined as potters sought to develop new, more scientifically-grounded recipes for glazes and enamel decoration. Some potters even obtained examples of popular Chinese and European ceramics and reverse-engineered them to replicate their effects. This vase made by the Kinkozan pottery studio in Kyoto features a translucent navy-blue ground glaze and a brilliant gold over-glaze enamel, both of which were based on recipes originally developed by the Meissen factory in Germany. Knowledge of the German glaze and enamel recipes may have been acquired by Japanese potters who made a study tour of European ceramic factories after the Vienna World's Fair in 1873, or they may have been developed with the help of Gottfried Wagener, a German chemist who lived in Japan and was friends with Kobayashi Sobei, head of the Kinkozan studio.

Covered Jar
Takeuchi Chubei (Japanese, 1852-1922)
Ca. 1900
Porcelain, copper wires, enamels
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, C018

Takeuchi Chubei was a multi-talented artist who worked in ceramics, cloisonné and glass. Active in the city of Nagoya, he built a national and international reputation for his ability to use cloisonné techniques on porcelain. Takeuchi's innovative technique can be seen on this jar, where he applied copper wires to a porcelain body and filled in the spaces with colored enamels. Getting ceramic, metal and glass to fuse together in this way was technically challenging and required Takeuchi to have a deep understanding of the materials and a complete mastery over the firing process.

Imitation Cloisonné Vase
Takahashi Yohei, called Taizan IX
(Japanese, died 1922)
Ca. 1870s
Glazed earthenware, enamels, gilding
Hope College Collection, 2017.20

Traditional Japanese kilns used wood for fuel, but during the Meiji period many commercial ceramic studios switched to new coal-burning kilns imported from Europe. The coal-burning kilns were more fuel efficient and allowed potters to control the firing process with greater precision. As a result, Meiji studio potters were able to produce greater volumes of ceramics with more complex glazes and enamel decorations than had been possible previously. This vase by Kyoto potter Takahashi Yohei features an intricate glaze and enamel design that successfully imitates the look of cloisonné.

Vase with Floral Design
Miyagawa Kozan (Japanese, 1842-1916)
Late 19th – early 20th century
Glazed porcelain, cobalt, enamels
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, C017

Miyagawa Kozan was perhaps the most famous Japanese ceramic artist of the Meiji period. He started his career making Satsuma-style earthenwares, but switched his primary focus to porcelain in the 1880s. Kozan was fascinated by the chemistry of ceramics and constantly experimented with new materials and techniques that enabled him to produce porcelains in a wide range of shapes, designs and colors. The blue and red design on this vase recalls Chinese porcelains of the 18th century. Kozan often imitated older styles of Chinese porcelain in order to capitalize on the demand for those wares among European and American collectors during the last decades of the 19th century and first decades of the 20th century.

The Poet Kakinomoto no Hitomaro
Unno Shomin (Japanese, 1844-1915)
Ca. 1912
Shakudo, Shibuichi, silver, gold
Loan from WorldBridge Partners,
MM017

While many Meiji sculptures were made for export to Europe and America, some were produced with the domestic market in mind. This sculpture of the 7th century poet Kakinomoto no Hitomaro is an example of the latter category. It was created by Unno Shomin, a renowned Meiji metalsmith who was honored with a special recognition from the imperial household in the 1890s. The primary materials of the sculpture are silver, shakudo and shibuichi, an alloy usually consisting of about three parts copper and one part silver. It was cast fully in the round, with the underside of the sculpture showing the poet's feet and the bottom of his robes. Kakinomoto no Hitomaro is considered one of the Six Immortal Poets of Japanese literature and has long been regarded as a symbol of elegance and erudition.

Roaring Tiger
Signed Seiko (Japanese, active late 19th century)
Late 19th century
Bronze, glass eyes
Hope College Collection, 2016.52

This sculpture imitates the naturalistic depictions of wild animals produced by 19th century European artists like Antoine-Louis Barye. Improved understanding of different patination and polishing techniques allowed Meiji bronze sculptors to create figures with a wide range of surface effects.

Heron
Signed Kuniteru (Japanese, active late 19th century)
Ca. 1900
Silver
Loan from WorldBridge Partners, S001

The history of Japanese sculpture stretches back more than 2,000 years. Prior to the 17th century, Japanese sculpture was primarily religious. A limited tradition of secular sculpture evolved between the 17th and mid-19th centuries, mostly in the form of carved toggles called netsuke that were used to secure purses and other small containers to people's clothing. Purely decorative sculptures also existed at that time but were relatively rare. Sculpture's status changed in the early Meiji period as Japanese artists learned more about Western sculptural traditions and began to produce sculptures aimed at Western buyers. In 1876, an Italian artist named Vincenzo Ragusa was hired by the Meiji government to teach Western-style sculpture at the Technical Fine Arts School in Tokyo. Ragusa introduced the classical and academic traditions of European sculpture, which were soon taken up by Japanese artists working in a variety of materials including metal, wood, ivory and ceramic. Birds and animals were especially popular subjects with Meiji sculptors, partly because those subjects were familiar from native Japanese art traditions and partly because they sold well in Western markets.

Young Woman with Umbrella
Baron Raimund von Stillfried (Austrian, 1839-1911)
Ca. 1875
Hand-tinted albumen print
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.268.4A

Photography was introduced into Japan in the early 1860s. Among the pioneers of the genre in Japan was an Austrian nobleman named Baron Raimund von Stillfried, who established a photography studio in the port city of Yokohama in the early 1870s. Stillfried trained and employed numerous Japanese assistants to help him compose images that captured different aspects of Japanese life at that time. This image of a young Japanese woman holding an umbrella and seeming to struggle against a gust of wind and rain was staged in Stillfried's Yokohama studio around 1875. Although the photograph appears to capture an instant in time, in fact the model would have had to stay still for several minutes to allow for the relatively long exposure times of early cameras.

Hair Dressing
Kukasabe Kimbei (Japanese, 1841-1934)
Late 19th century
Hand-tinted albumen print
Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.268.19A

Kukasabe Kimbei learned the art of photography from Baron von Stillfried, while working as one of Stillfried's studio assistants in the 1870s. Kimbei, as he was commonly known, established his own studio in Yokohama in 1881 and later acquired Stillfried's studio and all of his negatives when Stillfried left Japan in 1886. From that time until he retired around 1912, Kimbei was the most famous and most commercially successful photographer in Japan. He specialized in albums of genre scenes and landscapes that he sold directly to tourists and through trading companies that exported them overseas. Many of Kimbei's photographs, such as this image of women dressing their hair or the adjacent landscape images, seem to have been inspired by the compositions of traditional Japanese Ukiyo-e prints and paintings.

Wisteria blossomos, Kameido

Kukasabe Kimbei (Japanese, 1841-1934), Late 19th century

Hand-tinted albumen print, Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.268.25B

View of Rapids at Kyoto

Kukasabe Kimbei (Japanese, 1841-1934), Late 19th century

Hand-tinted albumen print, Gift of David Kamansky and Gerald Wheaton, 2014.23.268.7B

Conclusion

The Legacy of Meiji Art

Art played a vital role in the emergence of Japan as a global power during the Meiji period. Politically, it provided tangible evidence of the Meiji government's successful modernization efforts and strengthened the country's sense of national identity. Art making and selling offered steady employment and gave thousands of people a sense of purpose and vocation at a time of great social upheaval. The revenues generated by art stimulated Japan's economy and supplied crucial funds for the country's acquisition of foreign technologies and expertise. Further, Meiji art expanded Japan's cultural horizons and set the stage for many new developments in Japanese painting, printmaking, photography, ceramics and sculpture later in the 20th century. Indeed, the legacy of Meiji art continues to resonate in many aspects of Japanese life today—from automobiles and electronics to films and food—where pride in craftsmanship and a willingness to adapt and innovate are still essential principles

The impact of Meiji art was not confined to Japan, but was also felt abroad, especially in Europe and America. Several major 19th and early 20th century art movements including Impressionism, Art Nouveau and Aestheticism were heavily influenced by Japanese art that came to the West during the Meiji period. Perhaps more importantly, Meiji art helped Europeans and Americans develop a more positive perception of Japan. American author James W. Buel was so favorably impressed by the Japanese exhibitions at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis that he wrote: "…it is no exaggeration of their merits to say that in not a few respects Europeans may learn much from the Japanese. No people are more skillful, artistic, painstaking, reliable, truthful, loyal or courteous, and their sense of justice is likewise strongly marked. They have been called the Yankees of the east because of their ingenuity and indomitable courage, but they also deserve the designation of Greeks of the east, for their military prowess and artistic instincts, which are not exceeded by any people of the world." Although American and British views of Japan turned more negative during the World War Two years, Japan still remains more closely tied to the West than any other Asian country, thanks in part to the cultural rapport that was established by its arts during the Meiji period.

Page 67 Page 38 Page 47 Page 47 Page 93 Page 25 Page 59, 71 Page 39, 41, 42
Page 56 Page 46 Page 46 Page 99 Page 75, Cover, (front and back)

A selection of Meiji era objects
included in the exhibition

Page 94 Page 94 Page 77 Page 77 Page 55 Page 100 Page 51, 52 Page 94
Page 76 Page 48 Page 74, 75 Page 78 Page 83, 95, 97-98

Kruizenga Art Museum Mission

The mission of the Kruizenga Art Museum is to educate, engage and inspire the students, faculty, staff and alumni of Hope College, as well as the broader communities of Holland and West Michigan. By presenting art from a wide range of cultures and historical periods, the museum fosters the qualities of empathy, tolerance and understanding that are essential components of Hope College's mission to provide an outstanding Christian liberal arts education while preparing students for lives of leadership and service in a global society.

The Kruizenga Art Museum Hope College