University of North Carolina Asheville
Journal of Undergraduate Research
Asheville, North Carolina
May 2020

All Heart:
The Shared Sentimentality of Ukiyo-e and Art Nouveau

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Abstract

Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century; awash with fascination for Japanese art- experienced art movements heavily influenced by East Asia. Amidst Europe's fascination with Ukiyo-e woodblocks and scrolls, expressive periods such as Impressionism and Art Nouveau emerged as a result. Alternatively, Japan's Edo era art was born from the political unrest of civil war, two sides battling for the future of Westernization. This paper examines the spheres of influence between Art Nouveau and Ukiyo-e woodblocks and how this shaped perceptions of idyllic womanhood, commercialization, and traditional garmentry through the lens of decorative art. The dialogue between the Eastern and Western art worlds investigated by geopolitical and poetic history to illuminate what it means to be a woman "worthy" of depiction in art. The pictorial world of the originator of the Ukiyo-e movement, Hishikawa Moronubu, is explored by a visual analysis of his seventeenth century work "Beauty Looking Back". On the other side of the world, the father of Art Nouveau; Czech artist Alphonse Mucha's "Gismonda" (1894) is paralleled for its illustrational likeness and connection. The vividly animated quality in the organic lines of Art Nouveau could be seen decorating the wrists, furniture, and houses of in vogue Europeans; historically impacted by the intentful mass marketing of Chinese export paintings, geared to a Western demographic. The impact of feminine sentimentality and decoration is compounded by a study of Edo female poet Ema Saiko, for a look into driving mindsets of the time. This study contends the profound impact of ethereal art that belies harsh reality, as pictures from the floating world flowed into the new art of Europe.

1. Introduction

Amidst a world plagued by illness, war, and suffering— humanity seeks one thing— the heart. An artists' willingness to strip bare their emotion to manifest a vivid heart speaks to a weary soul. Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century was awash with fascination for Japanese art and experienced art movements that were heavily influenced by East Asia. Expressive periods such as Impressionism and Art Nouveau emerged as a result of Europe's fascination with Ukiyo-e woodblocks and scrolls. Alternatively, Japan's Edo era art was born from the political unrest of civil war, two sides battling for the future of Westernization. This paper examines the spheres of influence between Art Nouveau posters and Ukiyo-e prints and how this shaped perceptions of idyllic womanhood, commercialization, and traditional garmentry through the lens of decorative art. The dialogue between the Eastern and Western art worlds is investigated by political and poetic history to illuminate what it means to be a woman "worthy" of depiction in art.

The pictorial world of the originator of the Ukiyo-e movement, Hishikawa Moronubu, can best be understood by a visual analysis of his seventeenth century work "Beauty Looking Back". On the other side of the world, the father of Art Nouveau Czech artist Alphonse Mucha's "Gismonda" (1894) is paralleled for its illustrational likeness and connection. The vividly animated quality of Art Nouveau could be seen in the organic lines decorating the wrists, furniture, and houses of in vogue Europeans; historically impacted by the intentful mass marketing of Chinese export paintings, geared to a Western demographic. The impact of feminine sentimentality and decoration expressed in a study of Edo female poet Ema Saiko, provides a look into driving mindsets of the time. This study contends the profound impact of an ethereal art that belies a harsh reality, as pictures from the floating world flowed into the new art of Europe.

Investigating the iconic manner in which the West came into contact with, "discovered" and perceived beauty in Japanese aesthetic sensibilities provides first entry into understanding the artistic interactions that formed these spheres of influence. Vital elements such as visual artistic motifs, international perceptions (shaped by regionally-limited knowledge) that are dictated by beliefs and perceptions of the time and geographic location, and cultural and trade exchanges all shine a contextual light on the infinite, movingly circular process in exploring the journey of the manner in which Japanese and Western spheres of expression thoroughly influenced one another.

The specific eras of Japanese and European art history around which this analysis will revolve are the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Depending on which cultural framework one may analyze, these chronologies are measured and understood differently in their respective hemispheres. In the European context, this era is commonly referred to as the modern period. The clear cross—cultural line that connects European and Japanese art is the main impetus for investigating the impact on a less commonly compared European movement, that being Art Nouveau "Modern Art". The visual markers of Edo era woodblocks left a traceable impact on the artistic motifs of Art Nouveau. The primary intent of comparing and analyzing these two movements at opposite ends of the earth is to illustrate the undeniable impact of Japanese prints on European art (particularly evident in the works of Mucha), in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Within this analysis, details of Japan's civil, sociopolitical, and cultural history including Emperor Meiji's reign as well as the Tokugawa Shogunate (the governing party of Japan during the famed Edo period), (江戸時代/ *Edo Jidai*) or Tokugawa period (徳川時代) which is the period between 1603 and 1868 in the history of Japan, will be investigated to provide deeper context to how the Ukiyo-e art world came about, as the time period acts as the cornerstone of the elements that drive the rise of this art. Foundations of traditionally minded Japan originate from ideals of Shinto Buddhist teachings. The Edo era is marked by residuals of the way of the kami (Shinto), Japan's multitheism that hails the natural world. These values battled with the rising emergence of an interest in de-isolation versus those interested in interacting with the West.

The matters of war politics and economic stability carry with them an impact on the art the people there will create as a response. With this understanding, a short analysis of Japanese political history needs to be provided in this essay. As J.S Murphy summarizes in his account of Japanese History from 1750 to 1900, on political progress, "The late Tokugawa shogunate (1853–67) witnessed the end of the Edo period in Japan, when the country emerged from a period of self-imposed isolation and modernized from a feudal military society as a result of the Meiji Restoration."[1] This illustrates the aforementioned rift between traditionalism and modernism in this relevant era of Japanese social history.

Contributing to this self-imposed rift among Japan, were the trade expeditions of American Commodore Matthew Perry— among other European and Western government dealings— as he plays a role in the events that ultimately brought upon an end to the military-oriented Tokugawa Shogunate. As a result, the city of Edo, "In December 1867 the 15th, and last, Tokugawa shogun, Yoshinobu, was forced to surrender to the emperor. The Meiji Restoration of imperial power had taken place… He surrendered to the imperial forces and formally opened Edo to the imperial troops. Emperor Meji entered the city, and, thus, in January 1868 the Meiji Restoration of imperial power had taken place."[2]

This understanding of the city of Edo's progression as a rising power, and the fall of samurai-led beliefs, is relevant to studying Ukiyo-e and the art that was produced as a result. In this period, the Japanese— in tandem with Confucian Chinese ideals as a natural extension of aforementioned deeply rooted Shinto beliefs— demonstrated a unique proclivity to depicting insular life which could be considered quite a natural form.

This affinity towards depicting the natural world allowed for a rise in a longstanding tradition of studying the intimacy of antiquity. Its unsaid, deeply riveting closeness to the pitter patter of everyday domestic activity was what these artists yearned to recreate. A visual adeptness could be contributed to a notable societal increase in literacy. This fixation is a result of the shaky political changes described by R.K. Thomas in a section on Tokugawa era writing and journals, lending credit to what Ukiyo-e desires to depict most: "The simultaneous growth of a thriving publishing industry that rivalled its contemporary European counterparts in scope also allowed for broader distribution… It was only in the Tokugawa period, however, that autobiographies in the current sense of the word appeared: philosophically self-reflective, retrospective, and combining subjective discourse with objective narrative."[3] This contributes to its naming of "Pictures of the Floating World". A political environment exploding against itself lends to a desire for oppositional simplicity, creating simplicity as an art motif.

A definition of this movement is provided by Julie Nelson Davis in "*Partners in print*" where she says: "Japanese picture or print depicting the pleasures of everyday life. Beginning in the 17th century, Ukiyo-e, produced mainly by the technique of woodcut, or woodblock, became the dominant art form in Japan until the late 19th century. Originally made in black and white, advances in woodcut printing in the late 18th century enabled the production of multicoloured works."[4] With this set precedent of the creational motifs that led to the characterization of this movement, we may look to the Tokugawa Shogunate's reign which heralded it.

Contextualizing the Tokugawa Shogunate's militaristic reign and fall, lays a groundwork for how Ukiyo-e may be framed. As Ukiyo-e was the progressive result of over a millennium of cultural changes, the artworks demand

even further reflection going back centuries in order to fully comprehend the details of its formation. Japan is a direct ancestor to China, rendering their artistic connections absolutely undeniable and simultaneously clear as day. Dora Amsden and Woldemar von Seidlitz in their analysis of the movement in "*Impressions of Ukiyo-e*" begin by accounting that although "the origin of painting in Japan is shrouded in obscurity, and veiled in tradition, there is no doubt that China and Korea were the direct sources from which it derived its art; whilst more indirectly she was influenced by Persia and India – the sacred font of oriental art – as of religion, which have always gone hand in hand."[5] With this, we may look to China as an informational pool for the origin of Ukiyo-e art styles and motifs.

2. Chinese Export Painting as a Predecessor to Ukiyo-e

To investigate the earliest forms of Eastern art which the West came into contact, a study of trade history offers some insight. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, encounters between China and the West resulted in a distinctive form of art for the Western market known as Chinese export painting. As its name indicates, this form of art specifically catered to the West. These paintings included oil paintings, watercolors, gouache and reverse- painting on glass. Michelle Huang states in *Reception of Chinese art across cultures*: "paintings for export were produced in large quantities in Canton (now Guangzhou), when from 1757 to 1842 the city was the sole port of access to China for foreign trade as a consequence of the control the Qing (1644-1911) government wished to exert over Sino-Western trade."[6] Later, when further treaty ports opened after the Second Opium War in 1856-60, export paintings were also created in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

The market in the West favored a set of aesthetic values very different from those of the Chinese, which explains why the emulation of Western art, and the application of Western techniques was prominent in Chinese export painting. Chinese trade history in its relation to the European art export market lends understanding to the international popularity of Ukiyo-e, because this form of commercialized art notably catered to its audience. This is strongly shown in the choice of subject matter, particularly works embedded with fantasies of the Orient, such as scenes of Chinese corporal punishment and settings with the exoticized Chinese ladies which historically intrigued Western audiences. The concept of commercialization will play a role in the progression of this analysis.

On the subject of characterizing East Asian traditional painting from the perspective of a Chinese painter: Martin Powers provides a succinct statement in *"A Companion to Chinese Art",* saying that the "Depiction of that world assumes an interest in its reality, but this is not to state that the painter's goal was a re-creation of the visually perceived world."[7] This quote allows viewers to understand the multi-layered expressive concepts that go into depicting everyday life; as artists capture scenes from nature and domestic scenes with a whimsical flair covered with the cultural tonality of Asia. A borrowing of this concept will appear in Western art movements such as Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and notably *Art Nouveau* later in history.

This inclination for the lyricism found in nature (a feature of traditional Chinese painting) struck a chord with the domestic populus. When Japanese art fuses elements from China and Japan it is often related to its own genre referred to as "*yamato-e*". *Yamato-e* literally translates to "Japanese pictures," in which artists credit themselves from learning directly from their ancestral predecessors in the East Asian scholar-painting tradition. This subset is considered as the illustrational manifestation of the everchanging Japanese blueprint during the early Heian period (794 CE).[8] In these works, the influence of Chinese painting style grows apparent, as the Japanese began the shapeful process of establishing its own autonomy from its foundational Chinese influence.

The connection of these two countries is permanently embedded by their history. As summarized by a section in "*Nihonga Meets Gu Kaizhi*", "Part of the move to incorporate the ancient tradition came from a recognition that the Japanese painting tradition itself emerged from the more ancient Chinese tradition."[9] The concept holds itself a central position in Japanese art history as it relates to China. Yamato-e marks itself as a pivotal step in establishing the separation of what becomes exclusively Japanese art as it uncovers its own values in art and prose.

Looking at romanticized monotony as a theme in Chinese and Japanese art, emphasis is placed on the subjectivity that underlies the experience of domesticity and ethereal, otherworldly beauty in the mundane world. The importance placed on the painter's role as a subjective agent, as opposed to transparent medium, is traceable to the inception of idyllic domesticity as a subject of cultural expression in Japan. As the translation of "Ukiyo-e" into English as "Pictures of the Floating World" may suggest, this artistic movement primarily intended to, as artists valued, depict imagery of spiritual aspects of idyllic everyday life.

3. Hishikawa Moronobu and "Beauty Looking Back"

When one, in a contemporary Western context, pictures Japanese art or Ukiyo-e as a movement, undoubtedly the titular figure in popular reception is Katsushika Hokusai, known for his Great Wave off Kanagawa, 神奈川沖浪

裏— known for impacting the West like a tsunami in terms of the west responding and appreciating Japanese art. However, to begin this exploration of the heavily— studied Ukiyo-e one should first look at the artist who is credited as the "father of Ukiyo-e": Hishikawa Morunobu.

Born in 1618 in Chiba (North of Tokyo), Moronobu's much lesser-known name and works set the scene for the oldest examples in the movement. The context provided by Chinese export painting is relevant to the manner Morunobu processed his works, and the framework in which his art was produced. As aforementioned, the piece in question to be examined on will be his *Beauty Looking Back*, 見返り美人図/*Mikaeri Bijin* (Fig.1), a color on silk painting dated seventeenth century Edo period.

Early forerunners, such as Moronobu, of an artistic movement may be lost to history outside of niche, specialized academic circles. Thankfully, for the sake of studying art history and culture, lesser accredited pioneers are being studied more so than previously. Artists such as Moronubu have received the title of pioneer or forerunner without necessarily gaining the honor and immortal recognition of the most well-known artists. Rather, they develop grace, vivaciousness, and originality posthumously. Moronobu can be noted for his depictions of scenes which draw inspiration from historic events or fables and legends, and his affectionate and conscious detailing of the most innermost happenings of noble society (including their erotic and romantic adventures, entertainment, and fashions.) Moronobu's works follow a self laid path— wherein he channels his genuine love of beauty to simply concern himself with filling his art with brimming, abundant life.

Moronobu's pictorial world contains remnants of many aesthetic themes known to be Japanese. Images range from the loud public and extravagant stages of *Kabuki* plays to the casual outdoor pleasures of flower-viewing, or *Hanami* in spring.[10] For example, he exhibits the joy of boating along a river in summer, or the sultry walls of a folded door in a pleasure quarters in winter. Prints of raved-about courtesans and escorts, the distant laughter of a drunk with pleasure old noble during a party, and encounters of loving couples all make for an iconic collection of works that may be attributed to what denotes Moronobu's works as uniquely his own.

Beauty Looking Back is one of his most well-known works. Japanese citizens would know it as a historic piece that has even decorated postage stamps. Owned by the National Tokyo Museum, the piece graces the cover of museum pamphlets distributed at the entrance.[11] In *Beauty Looking Back*, the viewer is thus greeted delicately, and inoffensively. Demure and passive is how the art exhibits itself to the viewer. They are embraced and welcomed to be viewed by muted color tones. Immediately, this presentation in itself illustrates a contrast to contemporary Western visual sensibilities. The peacefulness of the subject could make using the word "exhibits" too strong for the work's tonality. The color-on-silk painting depicts a young woman, a popular theme not only in Edo Japan but worldwide. Dressed in an evocatively rouge kimono; the figure is crowned by traditionally styled hair, clipped up in an array of styling to create an elegant hairstyle. "Symbolism of Hairstyles in Japan and Korea" elaborates that"Long hair was the symbol of the upper class who did not engage in labor. In everyday life they wore *tsuijoho* ("mushroom bun") where long hair was rolled up from the bottom and held tight using *kan'zashi* (hairpin). This style revealed the wearer's social position. Royalty and nobility wore high, luxurious hairstyles investing much money and effort because it was the easiest way to display their wealth."[12]

As evidenced by the figure's lengthy, delicately pinned back style; viewers may infer she is one living a privileged, happy life of status. Her adornments seem to be moving only slightly, making her silhouette the prime subject and epicentre of the work. Implied by the title, the subject resides in a small, peaceful movement as she turns her head. Her layered, patterned sashes seem to brush against each other as she barely recognizes the viewer; lending characterization to her reserved demeanor. Artistically framed in humility and grace, her pose acts as a visual indicator that suggests she is the admired subject of an onlooker. The enigmatic yet iconic woman in this work's desirability due to her humility is depicted by her faraway stance. The figure's demure demeanor designates her worthiness as a subject. Admiring reticence is relevant to the trends of Edo Japan, and thus this ancient principle in preferring stoicity still holds large regard in contemporary Japan.

The work presents the concept of attention and vanity; and depictions of femininity in art are complex. Fine lining the relationship of male interest in the female body, versus the agency of women being expressed, creates for interpretative implication. Beauty does not acknowledge the viewer; she is painted in a way that appears she does not want the viewer's attention. While portrayed as slight and attractive nonetheless, she does not pose still to be painted as seen in notable depictions of women in Western art of this period. It is debatable the subject's non interest in being depicted can be interpreted as objectifying—— as her mere existence is being glorified as a penchant of beauty; or that the artist purely and simply desires to appreciate his idea of beauty.

The interest in meekness of women traces back to the Japanese concept known as *Yamato Nadeshiko*, the ideal of a wife or daughter. In an essay on femininity in Japan, Michelle Ho provides a definition: "the expression *yamato nadeshiko, nadeshiko* deeply resonates with an idealized Japanese womanhood connected to nationalism, invoking qualities of elegance and obedience. Literally, *nadeshiko* refers to *dianthus superbus*, a pink flower, whereas *yamato* is the old name for Japan."[13] This term may be used as a comprehensive umbrella descriptor for the standard traits that are historically valued in East Asia. The timeless ideal of untainted black hair, pale white skin, and rouge lips; a standard that is interestingly also known in the West, in Brothers Grimm's portrayal of *Snow White*.

The garments worn by the subject are relevant to the interpretation of this piece. The Western term for the robe the subject of *Beauty Looking Back* is wearing is *Kimono*. The intricacy of this culturally and historically significant garment is in fact, a study and art of its own. Sewing patterns vary by trends of different periods, and subjects shown on the dress indicate time of year or event. There are many subsets and types of *Kimono* —— which can be differentiated by who is wearing them, and their age—— as well as the decorations on the silk (such as type of flower, ship, or breed of bird), or by season.

Categorizing the garment ranges from, for instance, a *Furisode*— the most formalized form o*f Kimono* worn in female coming of age ceremonies; to a *Yukata*, a casual and simple light garment worn in summer by all. The *Kimono* worn by the subject in this piece, is a spring dress. Inferring she is wearing a spring garment is evidenced that her dress shows more than one layer, but it is not heavy, containing pelts, as one would in winter. The theme of the woman's Kimono is solely and decidedly floral—— containing no other elements (such as waves or maple leaves), which would imply it is meant for another season that is not spring.

The spring *Kimono* is associated with the act of flower-viewing/Hanami, a popular activity when the cherry blossoms bloom; and people dress up in traditional Kimono to engage with the flora. Alongside a photo of a robe strikingly similar to the one worn by the subject in *Beauty Looking Back*, Keiko Nitanai explains in her book on *Kimono* that "This girls' kimono is made of red rinzu, popular during the Edo period and among the most expensive of Japanese silks. Rinzu is a smooth silk with a tone on-tone figured design. The use of different types of silk threads for the warp and weft adds contrast, texture and luster to rinzu fabric."[14] With this context, it can be understood this woman is wearing a spring garment, made of fine silk, meant for a special event.

The peaceful atmosphere of Edo period art, in rebellion to the political upheaval, sets a tranquil tone for the work. Moronobu's piece only contains the focal figure, and there is no background, so it is up to the audience to interpret for where exactly she may be. By the work's calm tonality, as well as recognizing the meaning of her Kimono, viewers could very well insert the figure amongst cherry blossom trees: petals flowing in the air, or they can imagine even a flower petal falling, ever so delicately upon her ornately styled cosmic black strands of hair. The tangibly soothing and tranquil tone to this piece contributes to how the painting presents itself. A lack of setting or backdrop is an artistic decision that acts as a testament to illustrating with simplicity in art that guides this movement.

The way the subject is standing vertically denotes she is standing on ground level, despite the lack of a visible floor. The use of negative space all around her creates an ambiguous field of muddy- shaded parchment. By establishing an understanding of space, her scene is set. Her suggested movement is slight, as Moronobu takes care in directing the line work fluidly with barely detectable visual suggestion denotes a turning back gesture that is subtle in nature. Line, in the case of this piece, is simultaneously pivotal and barely detectable.

Moronobu's portrayal of this woman, directed by the visual motifs of woodblock prints, is led by a definite decorative effect. The art of decoration is the prime motivation of analyzing Ukiyo-e as a period of art history. The aforementioned soothing nature is achieved as a result of equally filling up space in the picture and the distinct contrast of the red and black masses, with vitality in her moving action. While this piece does not depict a joyous *matsuri* (festival), or a sprawling abundant landscape as shown in other woodblock pieces, the eventfulness of this scene is not lost on a quiet moment; hence still creating a striking impression.

With a traditional form, she is nevertheless full of a keen awareness of life—— which Moronobu conveyed from his own desire for liveliness. Her rather ovallish head, flat curvature of her profile, and a plain expression all point to a style symbolic of court etiquette. This set of Edo etiquette rules are known for idealizing immobility, lack of feeling, and honorable stoicism. The appeal of this behavior is the idea of a quiet yet beaming intensity showing through a collected expression— Moronobu shows this by intentional placements of her facial features. The figure, framed by fluid, fine and only slightly intensified line work, moves with graceful style. Moronobu's adeptness for innovation and prolific production is clear, and *Beauty Looking Back* exemplifies his competency in posing female figures adorned by dignity. Clothed in silk, the beauty looking back holds herself as a powerful creation of Moronobu's woodblock-inspired technique with a flow of lines and a sweep of garment folds.

4. Ema Saiko; Feminine Prose

Within portraits of glorified womanhood, however, it is important to step back from popularized male artists. Looking to the lives of women in the period and especially their responses to these cultural mindsets, allow study for how such romanticized art impacts society. These artworks, after all, depict women's everyday realities. The agency of women and feminist concerns can be analyzed by briefly looking to the art of poetry; particularly those directly from a woman of the period.

The life and work Ema Saiko (江馬細香)（1787-1861), is one of the best represented female writers of early-modern Japan; her literary legacy preserved by her relatives and descendants.[15] Her piece, "*Arranging a Chrysanthemum*", accounting the intimate experience of admiring flora, is brief enough to be quoted in full—

"*Having cut a yellow flower, I put it beside a jade screen.*
It is regrettable that I cannot find a tidy match for this restrained scent.
A branch of rose with its hips ripe and red,
I casually add it to a single-flower vase; it accompanies the winter flower."[16]

This piece, written in 1812, holds relevance to the study of Edo art because in its verbiage it portrays self-reflection, and individualistic expression unique to her own personal environment. Translator Hiroaki Sato, within the text, provides historical context to analyzing this piece by explaining, "To read Saiko's poems is to relive the life of a liberated soul toward the end of the so-called feudalistic period."[17] This glimpse into her psyche allows contemporary viewers a look into the cultural and social circumstances of the time. To allude to the reflective, melancholy feminine worries that inherently exist in Edo artworks is this verse titled "*A Winter Day*":

"*Years pass swiftly like an arrow shot from the string.*
My small nephew's now past my hips, the big one past my shoulders.
In my inner-room, I've watched both children grow,
and feel my "fragrant years" further decrease."[18]

This work reflects what is generally associated as a feminine concern; relevant to understanding womens' role in this period as said concerns bear an impact as to how women are depicted in artful expression. Her poetry was very much a commentary on the gender roles of her world; in essence earnest, open content made by women for women. This is shown by her action of gathering paintings and poetry made by women whom she acquainted in her lifetime. Ema Saiko simply wished to document pleasantries such as the lives of women, flora and fauna, and the serenity of domesticity; all of which herald the art of Ukiyo-e.

An adoration for flora and fauna mirrors in a similarly- oriented piece from Moronobu, titled "Birds and Flowers" (Fig. 2), an ink on paper work from the fifth month of 1683. While Moronobu's style often focuses on women posed with bent knees, his repertoire also includes the iconic landscapes that typically are associated with Ukiyo-e (though the emergence of stylized landscape originates from China, it repopularized in the latter period with Hokusai and Hiroshige). His foundational ideas of luxury also included the natural world, not being limited to the worlds of actors and courtesans. Moronobu's popularity as an artist and founder of a school of art led to a breadth in his designs to be produced for woodblock books.

In "*Birds and Flowers*", six roused and ruffled cranes go about their daily life as they gather in a rambunctious party next to a quiet river, lined by vegetation. The linework of this piece employs sharp variations in boldness to indicate different positions in space, marking the cranes as a focal point. Moronobu illustrates with a keen attention to realism, barely electing to include bright saturation; the use of color only appearing very subtly on the cranes' heads— possibly to specify their species. The work highlights the need for direct observation of the natural world and drawing from nature; as the West will take on later with *en plein air*. An association of seasonal feelings rises in this work, particularly the migration of birds in autumn— therefore implying the melancholy of saying goodbye to a fleeting world.

Artistic foundations such as Chinese export painting, Moronobu's works, and female poetic responses set a scene for how artistic shifts such as Japonisme/Japonism may begin. In contemporary western study, the arrival of American Commodore Matthew Perry in Tokyo Bay in 1853 marks the formal end to Japan's isolationist practices. American contact heralds Japan's Meiji era, a form of conscious westernization that follows as a national choice; despite the forced opening of trade to the United States. The middle of the nineteenth century, due in no small part to American contact, saw the more traceable beginnings with an enchantment for Japan in Britain in particular. This excerpt from Ayako Ono provides a succinct chronology of Britain's procurement of Japanese wares: "Although a large number of Japanese objects such as ceramics and lacquerware were available during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, it was after the middle of the nineteenth century that the general public started to have opportunities to see and acquire them. Japanese objects could be seen in Britain by the early 1850s."[19]

Japan's popularity in English- speaking nations blossoms near the end of the second Industrial Revolution in these countries. Considering the central theme of natural and floral verdance in commercialized Eastern art, Japonisme fits as a quite timely progression of tastes in the midst of a urban- weary populous. In the commotion and clamor of laying keels, the embrace of a faraway fantasy land brought solace. The skies above their ports the color of the steel they weld, beauty arrived in the cranes soaring above. No better escapist source was found than in the serene painted or ceramic works, depicting those exact cranes.

Yet, this entry point of western and eastern dialogue, marked by Perry's arrival in 1853, is rather late. More accurately, the interaction can be traced back to the quiet, mutually beneficial beginnings of the cultural export deals that existed exclusively with the Dutch. As per Japan's strict anti- foreign policies, all Dutch trades were delegated to the remote, southeastern island of Dejima. As outlined in a text on Japanese Imperialization,

> "Dutch traders were the only Europeans tolerated in Japan,.. Fortunately, their exceptional politics of colonization assisted in transmitting to Japan some knowledge of the industrial and scientific advancement that was occurring in Europe. The Japanese purchased and translated scientific books from the Dutch to learn about Western curiosities and manufactures, such as medical instruments, plant seeds, and most interestingly, household food items like the kroket."[20]

As strongly as the desire for Eastern woodblocks and household wares grew, an adoration for Japanese dainty porcelain increased as well. These exchanges enthralled both parties involved, particularly among the opulent.

Eurasia's cross- continental commerce in the pictorial world broke new ground. Compounding with a European taste for fancified domesticity, the prolific manner in which these art worlds converse acts as the backdrop for the popularity of Japonisme. Decorating household tables and desks with Japanese woodblock prints, a practice which became known as 'japanning'[21] bloomed into a hot new trend of the time, particularly for affluent young women. Displaying and mounting these foreign woodblock prints grew to be regarded as an act of refined culturedness. The attainment of these curios were akin to collecting designer fashion, and seen as a form of social accomplishment. An act of informed decadence, was the practice of engaging with the east. "We know this from a letter of 1689 from Sir Ralph Verney, in which he agrees to pay 'a guinay entrance and 40 shillings more' to buy materials for his daughter Molly to be taught japanning at school."[22]

In addition, an ever growing fascination for the flora and fauna of East Asia, namely Japan, can be traced to as early as the mid eighteenth century. Competing with the compulsive demand in Europe for the fine and decorative arts of Japan was a desire to possess specimens and paintings of exotic and unknown flowers. These roots in decorative Japanese furniture and aesthetics eventually find their way to configure Art Nouveau. Generally, Art Nouveau can be traced to springing from a pivotal movement towards the decorative arts, appearing in Western Europe in 1892.

Yet, as evidenced by cultural crossings, the origin of Art Nouveau was by no means sudden. The art of fanciful adornment met with undulating responses towards its validity. The culmination of Art Nouveau's journey to being realized as an art form occurred between the fall of the Empire style around 1815 in France and the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris. The Exposition was a milestone for the decorative arts and Art Nouveau, where men of status were processing the social legitimacy of this "New Art", key moments are described by V. Charles and P. Bade:

"The definitive trends capable of producing a new art would not materialise until the 1889 Universal Exposition. There the English asserted their own taste in furniture; American silversmiths Graham and Augustus Tiffany applied new ornament to items produced by their workshops; and Louis Comfort Tiffany revolutionised the art of stained glass with his glassmaking. Clément Massier, Albert Dammouse, and Auguste Delaherche exhibited flambé stoneware in new forms and colours; and Henri Vever, Boucheron and Lucien Falize exhibited silver and jewellery that showed new refinements. The trend in ornamentation was so advanced that Falize even showed everyday silverware decorated with embossed kitchen herbs."[23]

These instances of artists participating in the 1889 Universal Exposition blossomed rather rapidly into a welcoming for decorative art. The initial resistance and fear due to an ingrained Western bias for impactful, realistic, and even gritty art— could resolve itself into arising into a revolution toward new forms of beauty. Artists could unchain themselves from the core restraints of traditionally oriented Renaissance styles. Old schools of art that are so sticky in European artists' techniques the penchant for realism remains deeply engrossed— organic expressions could shake off the glaring preconceptions of high art superiority. On the growing consciousness between France's social and decorative art in Rosella Froissart's "Socialization of the Beautiful and Valorization of the Useful" she states that—

"It was not until 1880, however, that the expressive and suggestive possibilities harbored within ornament and the domestic artifact were systematically taken up as agents of *l'art social*. At this time, the philosophers proposed a sociological approach to art, turning the work of art into a catalyzer of collectively shared 'pure sensations.' These currents of thought could not fail to have an impact on the debate surrounding Art Nouveau. On the issue of style, the debate intersected both with the rejection of the historicist repertoire and with the assimilation of rationalist vocabulary involving the combination of simple and discrete elements."[24] This emerging school of art intended to glisten up the most mundane household objects by catering to an inherent desire for a luxurious and comfortable domestic life. By harnessing appreciation for objects, Art Nouveau broke new grounds in terms of accessibility for the everyday person who craves a sight for sore eyes.

5. Alphonse Mucha and "Gismonda"

Enter Alfons Maria Mucha, internationally referred to as Alphonse Mucha, a decorative poster artist born in 1860 in the southern Czech Republic. In a manner stunningly like to Ukiyo-e's Hishikawa Moronobu, Mucha is credited

as the father of Art Nouveau. His iconic posters of women played a pivotal role in the establishment of this new mode of thinking, wherein style and utility can be intertwined. While Mucha himself was not so much interested in Art Nouveau as a label, thinking it a trend, he recognized the chance to advance his art career in Paris as a commercial artist. His career historically takes off after being approached by up and coming actress Sarah Bernhardt; to create an attention grabbing poster for a Greek play she is starring in. This commission bore great fruit not only for Mucha and Bernhardt, but also for the sake of Art Nouveau as a decorative movement. The poster formatted color lithograph would be titled "*Gismonda*" (1894) (Fig. 3), aptly named for the play being advertised.

Appearing before potential play-goers was a divine, idol-like figure, clothed in a grand kimono-esque layered robe— proudly standing amongst a golden botanical backdrop. The subject tilts a firm chin skyward, complimented by a strikingly flat and elongated form. Adorned by strawberry blonde, textured tendrils and a hushed pink skin tone, the figure bears similarity to Rosetti's Pre- Raphaelite redheads.[25] With a covered neck (echoing Japanese Edo era humility) the ethereal woman delicately grips a lightweight plant that towers above her, mirroring an enchanted sceptre. An overall shroud of overgrowth feels to envelop the subject as flora embellishes every aspect of her styling.

Mucha's design style in facial portraiture, epitomized in "*Gismonda*", features a trueness to reality. Bernhardt's eyes are emphasized, yet not enlarged in a cartoonish fashion to enhance youth. Her features are drawn in a charmingly compatible way that harmonize distinctly in their flatness— similarly to "Beauty Looking Back". The high and lowlights of the subject's flower crown and waves frame the natural impressions of her eyes; depth and dimension achieved through precise linework. Bernhardt's wider nose is celebrated with distinguished dainty lines: the bridge and bump popping with a feeling of personality. The nose wraps up into a pinched, dolly colored tip alluding to a sense of dramatic imagination and even cuteness.

The compressed nature of the subject's lips are very subtly hinted at with vague lines; instead marked by resolutely placed grooves and contours to deepen the impact of her slightly upturned closed smirk. Gismonda as a piece attempts to achieve a combination of what is most commercially optimal and what is going to strike a chord to people's desires for the decorative. Mucha attempts to capture a timeless aura, as beauty in its purest form, is eternal— reaching far beyond a young female body draped in silks.

Following Gismonda is Mucha's twenty year long commercial career in Paris. Throughout this time, he established the power of the product commission by producing a myriad of commercial illustrations; including designs for wallpaper for houses, carpets, china and silverware, and jewelry. The panel style of female centered illustration remained his motif, particularly in Absinthe and alcohol advertisements. In Mucha's "*Bieres de la Meuse*" (Fig. 3), translates to "Beer of the Meuse" as the artist entices the everyday alcohol drinker by evoking imagery of a delightfully intoxicated, half clothed woman.

"*Bieres de la Meuse*" is a French liquor advertisement completed in 1890; beguiling the viewer for a drink as she exists in a deeply saturated, framed universe. In a flat perspective, she lays on linework- heavy frames featuring shots of the place the beer was made; as well as the river Meuse. Mucha intentionally includes a central theme of poppies amidst the woman's detailed burnt amber hair as a call to his piece "Summer" (1896)— but notably is a flower native to France. The floral theme not only invokes tranquility with a viewer, but a sense of comfort and home to its demographic. Similarly to Gismonda, Meuse acknowledges her audience coyly: but they differ in their "decency" as Gismonda dresses more covered. The pieces utilize this coyness to attract them to a service, whether for a play or a cup of beer. *Meuse* invites the viewer into the poster's world, one of verdant imagery scattered with radiant hibiscus, forbidden fruit, and silk.

As men were quite primarily the main consumers of alcohol and beer, Meuse delicately grips onto her beer cup, with a loose, silky garment barely staying to her body, slipping to expose her shoulder and upper chest. There can be interpreted an aspect of liberation to this image, involving womens' sexual freedom in regards to the world of intoxication, drinking freely and messily. The artists' placement of her head being held up a leaning, wobbly hand implies tension and drunkenness. The top of the piece is graced by large, organic print of the name of the work, contrasted with a white background to emphasize the woman's identity and purpose of the illustration. To create such a dynamic piece combining text and art requires a heavy involvement in advanced lithography techniques.

While methods of woodblock and lithography are fundamentally different, Mucha's methods are directly derived from Ukiyo-e as individual plates are required for laying color— "The ingenuity of the Japanese artists in using a limited number of colours to create rich and varied effects demonstrated to Western artists how the limitations of colour lithography could be turned to their advantage. The Japanese also showed how text and image could be integrated into a satisfyingly unified whole."[26] The jointed use of graphic imagery and bold text makes for an animated poster; its impact elevated by its elongated format borrowed from Chinese scrolls.

An increasingly refined, wordly-oriented style of color application led to the growth of the poster style; which called for two lithographic stones. "*Pochoir*"— French for stencil— is a hand-coloring, tracing process that gained traction for its use in Art Nouveau and Deco content. This stenciling technique was valued for its capacity to produce vivid pigments; while typically just to add color to existing commercial objects such as cardsets— the technique found its way into the fine arts. In "*Pochoir in Art Nouveau*" the Japanese connection is highlighted:

"European graphic and fine artists did not begin to consistently integrate pochoir into their methods of creation and reproduction until the late nineteenth century, when they discovered the sophisticated use of color and patterns on Japanese stencil-printed kimonos and woodblock prints."[27] The rolling robes of Mucha and Moronobu mirror one another in their flowing lines and curves. Mucha utilized his inspiration from the delicate patterns to create his advertisements. This stylistic technique employed for beautifying objects of utility— one directly learnt from the ideas of Japan, demonstrates the complexity of Ukiyo-e's impact on Art Nouveau.

6. Conclusion: The Art of Pleasure

Momentous and miserable, big and small: nineteenth century Europe and Japan draw their curtains lamentably war-torn. In the thick of Europe and Japan tearing themselves to shreds, battling to understand their own identities— they carved a route of pure escapism into a floating world of elegance. Artists throughout history intake the social absurdities of their times in fragile yet withstanding composures, and at once demand novelty and an open heart. With a trembling, burning hand in the still of night; one that yearns for the pleasure of a fantastical yet comfortable newness— artists seek solace in the ambiguous reality of liminal space.

Alphonse Mucha, like his Western contemporaries, channels the emotional resonance from the world of Ukiyo-e in his art. Moronobu and Mucha's pieces are manifestations of cultural pride, both expressing what they find beautiful. The enormous pieces of Mucha achieve the same mythological theatrics the spiritual world of Shinto and Ukiyo-e carries. The romantic quality of Mucha's legacy recurs in contemporary manga: and the intersection of Europe and Japan persists. The act of retreating to a whimsically romantic world, speckled with elements that invoke familiarity and longing— women, fresh flowers, fine china, clean houses— eschews the immediate grief of the present. Dreamy images of the everso desirable tall, pale woman laying coquettishly under a blooming tree, delicately framed by orchids laid in richly colored, voluminous hair sweep the presses. Japanese irises illuminate the foreground, as another blissfully unaware female subject strolls a scarlet bridge to who knows where; transparent drapery flowing with her step.

Feminine sentimentality, across cultures, carries with it a poignant depictability. The act of attempting to find female artists grew to be its own formidable endeavor. Instead, it proves easier to celebrate their extensive history as art ingredients. They are viewed and observed before listened to: calling for an appreciation of the portraits made of them. Portraits of women are a direct window into cultural beauty standards, at the same time represent adoration. The repeated insistence of drawing docile, inoffensive women speaks to the historic human desire for peace. Whether portraiture that emphasizes certain traits is interpreted as objectifying or romantic, it is up to the contemporary viewer to decide. The young woman never falters to play the role of the vestal, timeless subject. The often disappointing aisles of history always must be considered in feminine studies- but one factor remains: the sentimental need for love.

Whether found in Art Nouveau's alcohol advertisements or Ukiyo-e's erotic prints, the motors in artists' hearts yearn for foreign lands and unknown worlds— and realms of expression that coat reality with all that is ethereal. While the ground that defines reality from myth shivers: a floating world operates on its own plane of flattened, simplistic color palettes and striking linework. The new art of the floating world was received by many as reckless hedonism; but these movements pose a tempting argument— what is existence without decadence?

7. Images

Fig. 1 Hishikawa Moronobu, “Beauty Looking Back”/見返り美人図,
late 17th century, color on silk, Tokyo National Museum
https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/beauty-looking-back-hishikawa-moronobu/gQFgWTeF6qSwkg?hl=en

Fig. 2 Hishikawa Moronobu, “Birds and Flowers”, 1683, fifth month,
Woodblock printed book; ink and color on paper,
Metropolitan Museum of Art
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/57665

Fig. 3 Alphonse Mucha, “Gismonda”,
1894, color lithograph, The Mucha Foundation
http://www.muchafoundation.org/gallery/themes/theme/sarah-bernhardt/object/21

Fig. 4 Alphonse Mucha, “Bieres de la Meuse”,
1897, color lithograph, The Mucha Foundation
http://www.muchafoundation.org/gallery/browse-works/object/46

8. Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Eva Bares, for being an art history mentor since 2016 to 2020 and to be the one to finalize this study. Thank you to Dr. Cynthia Canejo for working with me as the only student in your class. Thank you to Dr. Grant Hardy for being my third reader in the Asian Studies department, and thank you to UNCA for treating me well as an art history undergraduate up to now.

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