

# Cognitive Gaps in the Recognition of Masters and Masterpieces in the Formative Years of Japanese Art History, 1880–1900 Historiography in Conflict

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BECAUSE IT is a Western product, the concept of art history was alien to the East Asian cultural sphere in the nineteenth century. Art history as an institution was not a native Japanese construct but a new category imported from the West. Neither spontaneous nor indigenous, the art history of Japan was conceived by imitating and duplicating Western models. During the Meiji era (1867–1911), in reaction to Western influences, the young empire made major efforts to implant the legal and social apparatuses necessary for implementing a westernized constitutional monarchy. It was in accordance with this general consolidation of Japan's cultural identity as a nation-state that the notion of Japanese art history also took shape. Art history was recognized as an entity and as an indispensable tool for the cultural integration of the newly defined "Japanese subject."<sup>1</sup>

Several cognitive gaps appeared in the very conception of art history in modern Japan. Recognition of representative masters and masterpieces was by no means an autonomous process. In fact, the masterpieces of Japanese art history were to be selected on the basis of two contradictory criteria. On the one hand, they had to be recognized as fitting into the category of the fine arts, conceived and defined by Westerners as universally valid. On the other hand, the objects could not be reduced to mere imitations of Western art. As things Japanese, they had to manifest their own national characteristics and artistic tradition.<sup>2</sup>

It was in this narrow margin between compatibility with Western standards and irreducibility to Western products and tradition that the selection

was to be conducted, consciously or unconsciously. Moreover, the selection of “masterpieces” creates rejected objects as their inevitable counterparts, objects that fall out of the “fine arts” category. The interplay between the selected and the rejected reveals hidden mechanisms in the formation of masters and masterpieces in the field of Japanese art history.

This essay, therefore, does not intend to celebrate the artists and works that survived the historical challenge of selection. Nor does it aim to rehabilitate forgotten masters or disqualified masterpieces. Instead, it questions the underlying conditions that enabled the politics of nomination, celebration, rehabilitation, and even rejection of certain masters and masterpieces. It must be noted that the mechanism of rejection itself tends to be repressed and erased by and in the process of canonizing masters and masterpieces. To create the impression that the selection was conducted according to some irrefutable but invisible principle, any traces of arbitrariness must be effaced from official presentation. Investigations into the formative years of Japanese art history (1880–1900) must reveal not only the hidden side of this canonization as repression but also the implicit aesthetic value judgments it has refused to recognize.<sup>3</sup>

## 1

I will begin with a brief look at the position that Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) was to assume in the appreciation of Japanese art in the West, that of the most famous Japanese master. “Hokusai is the greatest artist that Japan has produced,” the French art critic Théodore Duret (1838–1927) declares in an article published in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1882.<sup>4</sup> This view is also directly echoed in *Art Japonais* by Louis Gonse (1841–1926), published in 1883. For this “old man crazy from drawings” (*veillard fou de dessins*), Gonse sets aside an entire chapter of his ten chapters on Japanese painting. As for his qualities, Hokusai’s “works rise high in the domain of esthetic Japanese art, and . . . they establish for it a definitive formula. . . . A talent so complete and so original should belong to humanity.”<sup>5</sup>

However, this enthusiastic appreciation of Hokusai among French art critics was not shared at all by Anglo-Saxon specialists. In his *Pictorial Art in Japan*, published in 1886, William Anderson (1851–1903), an English surgeon with long experience in Japan as an officer, openly attacks his French colleagues:

Hokusai’s memory is perhaps exposed to a greater danger from the admiration of his earnest, but too generous European critics than from the neglect of his countrymen. To regard him as the greatest artist of Japan and as the crowning representation of all that is excellent in Japanese art is unjust to this art, and may react unfavorably against the representation of the man who has suddenly been elevated to a position far above his own ambition.<sup>6</sup>

For Anderson it is unreasonable to compare a simple artisan such as Hokusai with Zen master painters. “We have no more right to compare [Hokusai] with a Chō Densu (1352–1431), a Sesshū (1420–1506) or a Shūbun (1414–1467?) than to draw a parallel between John Leech (1817–1864) and Fra Angelico (ca. 1400–1455).”<sup>7</sup> To Anderson’s eye, Hokusai is “vulgar” and best placed in a position comparable to that of the famous English caricaturist John Leech (better known perhaps as “Mr. Punch”). The mention of Fra Angelico also reveals Anderson’s implicit criteria. For Anderson the Italian Renaissance forms the absolute canon, and he tries to understand Japanese art within its framework. Thus, he finds in Japanese Zen painters the Oriental *Quattrocento*.<sup>8</sup>

Another criticism of the French view comes from Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908). In his review of Gonse’s *L’Art Japonais*, Fenollosa first points out its lack of proportion. While Gonse gives one hundred pages to the Edo period, “[a] single page is enough for the giants of the fifteenth century. . . . All those [who] rank far above any artist whatsoever of the last two hundred and fifty years” were completely overlooked by Gonse. Gonse, claims Fenollosa, “neglects the old masters, not because he is unable to understand them, but because he does not really know them.”

According to Fenollosa, this ignorance leads the French to misunderstand Hokusai’s place in Japanese art. “In their ignorance of all else, they look at everything Japanese, and especially Japanese art, only through the eyes of Hokusai.” Fenollosa wonders “how far [Gonse] has been biased by the extraordinary over-estimation prevailing” among other French writers on Hokusai. For Fenollosa, Hokusai, “the artisan artist,” is at best “an interesting sociological phenomena.” Contrary to Gonse, who supposes that “Hokusai’s influence brought to the highest perfection the whole series of the decorative arts” in Japan, Fenollosa declares that “we cannot too much enforce the fact that the prevailing vulgarity [of Hokusai] lowered the tone” of Japanese decorative art. Fenollosa’s conclusion is merciless: “As a designer whether for engraving or painting, his work cannot be compared for a moment with the great serious conceptions of the masters of either Europe or the East. Hokusai falls very low indeed.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Fenollosa, Hokusai’s vulgar caricatures cannot be compared with the “great serious conceptions” of high art. The distinction between vulgarity and nobility and the lower status he assigns to the decorative arts reveal Fenollosa’s dependence on the European academic hierarchy in the fine arts. Both Anderson and Fenollosa judge Japanese art and its history according to classical value judgments, which they do not question.

Contrary to this Anglo-Saxon assumption, the “*vulgarité*” of the *ukiyo-e* school is positively valorized by French critics. Duret maintains:

Hokusai belonged to the common people; [he was] a sort of industrial artist devoted to reproducing the types and scenes of popular every-day life. Vis-à-vis his contemporary artists who cultivated the great art of Chinese tradition, Hokusai occupied an inferior position, analogous to that of the Lenain brothers with respect to such academicians like Lebrun and Mignard, or the position of Daumier or Gavarni with respect to the laureats of the *École des Beaux-Arts*.

This passage is also quoted in Gonse's *L'Art Japonais*.<sup>10</sup>

Duret's intentionally simplified comparison clearly manifests his preference for popular illustrators over academic painters. Implicitly, he even suggests the real superiority of the "*l'école vulgaire*" to the official masters. According to Duret, "the aristocratic painters in Japan even looked down upon the class of *ukiyo-e* illustrators, of common people to which Hokusai belonged." Duret is alluding, by analogy, to the contemporary French academic painters who despised the impressionist painters. It now becomes clear why Duret, a famous defender of the "avant-garde," calls on Hokusai as a hero. Despite his inferior and unfavorable position in the hierarchy of art in Japan, Hokusai surpasses the grand style by grasping the everyday life of the common people with fresh, immediate, and vivid renderings (*prise sur la vif*). Duret thus sees in Hokusai the ideal predecessor of the French impressionists not only in his artistic achievement but also in his unfavorable social status. By celebrating this antiacademic popular artist in Japan, Duret justifies the French impressionists as an avant-garde, that is, authentic antithesis to the still dominant "bourgeois art."

It must be recalled that Edmond de Goncourt (1822–1896) also regarded Japanese art from the same "impressionistic" point of view. His *Outamaro* (1892) and *Hokousai* (1896) were published as part of his series of *Biographies des Impressionistes Japonais*. Duret and Goncourt called their beloved *ukiyo-e* prints "impressions," and, according to Duret, the Japanese artists were "the most perfect of the impressionists."

Evidently, this cognitive gap in the recognition of Hokusai symbolically reflects the hermeneutic difference in the aesthetic conception of Japanese art history as a whole. The Anglo-Saxon specialists showed a more precise empirical knowledge than the French art critics, but their value judgments, based on the "classical" canon, were more conservative than those of the French. As a matter of fact, while Duret and Louis Gonse, representing an avant-gardist stance in aesthetic judgment, tried to grasp the whole of Japanese artistic creation without excluding ceramics and bronze decorative arts, Anderson and Fenollosa paid attention only to Japan's pictorial art, faithfully following the Western academy's hierarchy of the fine arts.

## 2

With this cognitive gap in mind, we have to ask a second question: What was Hokusai's reputation in Japan at the time? To what extent were the judgments of the Westerners accepted or rejected by contemporary Japanese? And what kind of opinion did Westerners have about the Japanese reactions?

On the one hand, the French critics were proud of having rehabilitated Hokusai by saving him from the oblivion into which he had fallen in his native country: "It was not until the European judgment placed Hokusai at the head of the artists of [Japan] that the Japanese universally recognized in him one of their greatest men." Duret's opinion, quoted by Gonse with agreement (and later subscribed to by Edmond de Goncourt),<sup>11</sup> caused a sarcastic reaction on the other side. Fenollosa refutes the French opinion:

Hardly a Japanese of culture has been really converted to the foreign view. Critics [in Japan] regard with amazement or amusement European estimates. It is hardly to be expected, to be sure, that those genial Japanese gentlemen, who make a business of selling Hokusais, and other *ukiyo-e*, in the capitals of Europe, should take great pains to oppose the opinions of enthusiasts who pay them such high prices; but their real tastes are shown by what they buy for their own keeping.

Three remarks must be made about Fenollosa's observation. First, the Japanese art merchant alluded to, Hayashi Tadamasu (1853–1906), was going to exhibit what Japanese collectors had reserved "for their own keeping." Appointed Japan's general commissioner for the 1900 Exposition Universelle Internationale in Paris, Hayashi would take charge of the painstaking job of transporting and mounting Japanese classical and historical treasures to exhibit for the European public.<sup>12</sup>

Second, the selection of these masterpieces was made in Japan, and, when his book review was published in July 1884, Fenollosa himself was actually taking part in the investigative tour in Nara and Kyoto, along with Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913) and others.<sup>13</sup>

Third, despite Fenollosa's assertion, it cannot be denied that the French critics' high appreciation of Hokusai did influence, to some extent, Japanese judgment. The first biography of Hokusai in Japan was written by Iijima Kyoshin and published in 1893. In his postface to Iijima's book, Kobayashi Bunshichi, promoter of the book, regrets that Hokusai was not yet fully appreciated in Japan as a master. As a necessary remedy, Kobayashi brings the readers' attention to Hokusai's reputation in Europe, and, for the sake of justification, Kobayashi quotes from a famous French "*japonisant*" art critic, Philippe Burty (1830–1890). According to Burty, Hokusai's richness in subject matter and dexterity of brush stroke is comparable only to that of Peter Paul Rubens.<sup>14</sup>

Still, these circumstances indicate that Hokusai's reputation was mainly due to the enthusiasm of his Western admirers. When Edmond de Goncourt finally published his *Hokousai* in 1896, William Anderson wrote a private letter to the French writer. In a condescending manner, Anderson blamed Goncourt for having overlooked his pioneering survey on the Japanese painter. "I regret I did not know sooner that you were engaged upon your important task as I could have lent you a copy of the *Ukiyo-e Ruiko* which I have lately transferred to the British Museum."<sup>15</sup> Also in 1896, the famous art merchant Siegfried Bing publicly protested that his project of translating Hokusai's biography had been smuggled into the hands of Hayashi and Goncourt. This controversy of priority suggests two things. First, Iijima's book was at least partly written to satisfy the French need for reliable information on Hokusai's life and work. Second, the dispute about Hokusai was of primary importance to the fin de siècle European art market.<sup>16</sup>

### 3

Such heated controversies concerning the recognition of Hokusai as a master are totally absent from the first official description of Japanese art history. It was only in 1900, ten years after the promulgation of its constitution, that Japan finally devised an official "Art History" on the occasion of the World's Fair in Paris. Aiming at "enhancing the national dignity," the Imperial Commission of Japan published in French a lavish and monumental *Histoire de l'Art du Japon* and also exhibited its cultural treasures in a building imitating the main hall of Hōryūji temple, which was boasted to be the oldest surviving wooden construction in the world. This publication and exhibition clearly show that the Japanese government felt it necessary, effective, and profitable to demonstrate the existence of its national artistic tradition to the rival nations of the world.

Underneath the official ostentation lay two important events: the establishment of Japanese art history as a discipline in the humanities and the politics of conservation. It was not until the opening of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō) in 1889 that the word "*bijutsushi*" (art history) was recognized as an official term. However, "art history" was subordinate to "aesthetics" (*bigaku*) in the curriculum. That year, Ernest Fenollosa first lectured on "aesthetics and art history"; in 1890, the following year, Okakura Tenshin succeeded Fenollosa and gave lectures on Japanese art history for three years. With Tenshin's lectures, Japanese art history was established as an academic discipline. Satō Dōshin makes the point that the Western concept of aesthetics and art history was imported into Japan by a state-hired foreigner (*o-yatoi gaijin*), Fenollosa, and was implanted in Japan by way of translation; further,

this framework was applied to Japan by a native scholar, Okakura Tenshin, to create the Japanese equivalent of a Western-style description of art history, articulated by stylistic periodization (which until then had yet not been established).<sup>17</sup>

Along with the foundation of art history as a discipline in the Japanese national education system, the government sponsored investigations to identify art objects that should be nominated as honorable national historical treasures (Rinji Zenkoku Hōmotsu Torishirabe-kyoku at the Ministry of the Imperial Household). The project of compilation, which consisted of selecting treasures and classifying them in eight different categories, listed 213,091 works (1888–1897). This project advanced hand in hand with conservation politics. In 1897 the Ministry of the Interior put into effect a law for the conservation of old temples and shrines (Koshaji Hozon-hō) to prevent further devastation of historical Buddhist monuments (Haibutsu Kishaku) and the uncontrolled exodus of treasures to foreign countries that had been taking place since the Meiji Restoration (1867). In short, the publication of the first official art history of Japan in 1900 can be understood as the outcome of these political initiatives.

In his study of the formation of an official art history in modern Japan, Tagaki Hiroshi points out three strategic policies that the Japanese government followed in the final decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> First, the rigid Europeanization through the pure imitation of Western styles that had characterized Japanese cultural trends in the previous decade (known as the “*Rokumeikan*” period, after the Western-style Reception Hall) gave way in the 1890s to the intentional invention and demonstration of characteristic Japaneseness in cultural politics, both in domestic implementations and in manifestations abroad.

Second, comparisons with and references to the European tradition were frequently used for the sake of explanation. Okakura Tenshin maintained that the Buddhist sculptures of the Nara period bear comparison with Greek classical sculptures. Fenollosa also regarded the Nara period in Oriental art history as the equivalent of ancient Greece. Kuki Ryūichi saw a parallel between what Kyoto owes to Nara and what Rome owes to Athens. By these analogies between Greco-Roman classical art and Japanese antiquity, one could expect to obtain a tautological effect. On the one hand, it was flattering to the Japanese to see Nara and Kyoto enjoy the dignifying comparison to European classical canon. On the other hand, Westerners could find intellectual pleasure in understanding Oriental art by referring to their own aesthetic canon, believed to be universal.

Third (and this is a combined effect of the previous two factors), *L'Histoire de l'Art du Japon* embodied a Japan understood to be the incarnation of *The Ideals of the East*. Clearly borrowing the idea from Okakura Tenshin, Kuki

Ryūichi proudly declared in the preface that in China and India, despite their history of several millennia, few elements of their cultural heritages survived wars and calamities, while in Japan the lingering perfume of the lost glorious civilizations was preserved intact. "It goes without saying that Japan can boast the finest taste of its own, but it is nonetheless true that the backbone of Japanese art is constructed by accumulating all the essences of the Oriental arts."<sup>19</sup> The English translation, published as late as 1913, is curiously prosaic: "It is not too much to say that Japan, while being a world's public garden, may also be regarded as a treasure house of Oriental art" (p. ii). The French translation by Emmanuel Tronquois is more explicit: "La conservation de ces epaves uniques nous permet, sans exagération, d'affirmer que notre Empire n'est pas seulement un parc public du monde mais aussi un trésor où tout ce qui reste de l'ancien art oriental s'est gardé" (p. xiii).<sup>20</sup>

Okakura Tenshin had been fostering the idea that its geographic position allowed Japan to play the historical role of synthesizing India and China, thus incarnating the Ideal(s) of the Orient in art. Tenshin was convinced that Chinese philosophy and Indian ethics were synthesized in Japan by way of aesthetic expression. According to Takashina Erika's hypothesis, *Chi-Kan-Jō*, the enigmatic triptych that Kuroda Seiki presented to the Parisian International Exposition in 1900 was nothing but an audacious illustration of Tenshin's idea.<sup>21</sup> "*Chi*" (knowledge) represents Chinese philosophy, and "*jō*" (emotion or charity) suggests Indian ethics; "*kan*" (sensibility), which is located between knowledge and emotion, is realized in Japan as aesthetics. As the metaphor of three major Asian civilizations, this triad can also be a Buddhist iconography of the Shaka triad in disguise: Shaka (Buddha Shakyamuni) at the center, representing art, is assisted by Monjū (bodhisattva Manjushri), incarnating knowledge, and Fugen (bodhisattva Samantabhadra), the personification of charity.

In this megalomaniacal vision, we can certainly detect the self-confidence of Japanese intellectuals after the victory in the Sino-Japanese War. The Empire of the Rising Sun was then expected to represent the whole of Asia, rehabilitating its prestige after the decline of India and China. Yet it is ironic that Kuroda's ambitious triptych was exhibited in Paris with the simple title of "Étude de Nus" (Study of Nudes). In this gap, between the bravado at home and timidity abroad, can we read an ambivalent expression of the inferiority complex that the awakening Japan was suffering in 1900?

#### 4

The idea of Japan as the culmination of the "Ideal of the East" in artistic expression, synthesizing India and China, is also ambitiously declared



at the end of the preface to *L'Histoire de l'Art de Japon*. The English translation reads:

It is our intention to compile at no distant date a complete history of the art worthy of the name, and which will not only serve as a depository of information on the history of Oriental art but also will supply important contributions to Oriental history in general. The Japanese, for the reasons referred to, are undoubtedly far more qualified to undertake an ambitious work of this description than either the Chinese or Indian peoples (p. ii).

The French translation better conserves the original idea:

En même temps que l'encyclopédie des arts orientaux, il [the future definitive version of the "Histoire"] renfermera l'histoire même de l'Orient. Trésor d'art du monde oriental, le Japon est le seul dont on puisse attendre ce magistral ouvrage. Seul, il en a dans ses mains tous les éléments réunis. Seul, il l'accomplira. Ni l'Inde, ni la Chine ne le sauraient (p. xvi).

In this text India and China are deprived of the ability to describe the authentic history of Oriental art, while this capacity is proudly attributed to Japan. Although almost erased from the abbreviated English translation (probably for diplomatic reasons under the Anglo-Japanese Alliance), Kuki's original text in Japanese clearly echoes Tenshin's conviction that by describing the outline of Japanese art history, one can understand the essentials of the art of the whole Orient.

I will make four remarks on this official version of Japanese art history. First, Hokusai's importance is totally neglected in the official version. As noted earlier, in his description of Japanese paintings, which is subdivided into ten chapters in his *Art Japonais*, Louis Gonse dedicates an entire chapter to Hokusai (pp. 269–292). William Anderson also devotes six pages to Hokusai in his *Pictorial Art in Japan* (pp. 94–101). Although he is concerned mainly with refuting and rectifying the overestimations of Hokusai made by his French colleagues, the fact remains that Anderson illustrates his book with Hokusai's painting *Tametomo with Demons*, which he himself possessed. For Sesshū, whom he highly esteemed, Anderson could insert only some poor woodblock copies of drawing models and an image of a dragon, the authenticity of which has now been challenged. By contrast, in *L'Histoire de l'Art du Japon*, Hokusai is simply placed among forty or so *ukiyo-e* designers with only a short biographical summary of twelve lines. There is no discussion at all of his meaning for Japanese art.

Second, in this official publication, there remain no traces of the controversy about the relative superiority of Hokusai and Zen Buddhist painters. Instead, the works of antiquity—absent in previous publications—take on a prepon-

derant weight. Of the whole nine chapters, three are devoted to the reigns of the three emperors, Suiko, Tenchi, and Shōmu, ranging from 593 to 748. Of more than 1,500 years of history, one-third of the whole description of art (including the monuments of each epoch) is allocated to these 150 years.

Third, this apparent disproportion is fully understandable, however, in the light of the ideology shown in the preface. The Suiko era marks the introduction of Buddhism into Japan, with the bronze statue of the *Shaka Sanzon* triad at the Hōryūji temple as the representative masterpiece with a strong Korean archaic character. The Tenchi era is characterized by the rigorous Indian and Greek (somewhat “classical”) style, with the wall painting of the Golden Hall of Hōryūji as a typical extant example. The Shōmu era is marked by the predominant Chinese influence of the prosperous Tang dynasty; the bronze *Yakushi Sanzon* (Bhēchādjayagura) triad of the Yakushiji temple and others are singled out as the incarnations of this era’s spirit.

Thus, Japan’s antiquity paves the way to the synthesis of Asian artistic heritage—Indian, Chinese, and Korean, to be succeeded by the “nationalization” and naturalization of its art in the flourishing of medieval Fujiwara culture in Kyoto. It is worth adding that, on the one hand, this conception also perfectly matches Okakura Tenshin’s lectures on Japanese art at the School of Fine Arts;<sup>22</sup> on the other hand, the masterpieces referred to in this context are works that were investigated by the Office for the Research of National Artistic Treasures and were among the first pieces canonized as “national treasures” in December 1897.<sup>23</sup> Fourth, the apparent disqualification of Hokusai in this official version does not necessarily mean a total change of perspective. The fact remains that this first official discourse was prepared to meet Western expectations. Just as Hokusai’s high reputation was a product of Western expectations, so too was *L’Histoire de l’Art du Japon* a product specially made for the Western gaze. The French preface presents its mission precisely in these terms: “Nous avons compris qu’il était de notre devoir de mettre en valeur aux yeux des nations, les merveilles commises à notre garde. C’est le plus sûr moyen pour nous d’exalter notre gloire nationale” (p. xiv).

## 5

In pointing out the contrast between the “*japonisant*” interpretation of Japanese art and Japan’s official self-portrait for the sake of “national glory,” Satō Dōshin makes a relevant remark.<sup>24</sup> While the official image of Japanese art history was made of ancient treasures of the princes and members of the dominant class, the *japonisant* vision was based on recent arts and decorative arts made for export, destined for the common people—“*homme du peuple*,” as Duret put it. The cognitive gap in the recognition of masters and masterpieces

stems from these symbolic cross-purposes in the encounter of the East and the West.

One typical example of this gap can be found in the so-called Buddha of Meguro. Bought by Duret and Cernuschi during their trip to Japan in 1872, the largest bronze statue taken out of Japan is now conserved at the Cernuschi Museum in Paris. Sumptuously illustrated in Gonse's book as a reminder of the Great Buddha of Nara, this product of the Edo period had not been seriously taken into account by most Japanese specialists in the study of Buddhist statues. It seems as if the bronze products of the Edo period were found lacking in artistic value and undeserving of a place in any survey of art history. It so happened that the original provenance of this colossal statue remained a mystery until Bernard Frank, a French specialist of Japanese popular beliefs, identified it at the Banryūji temple in Meguro, downtown Tokyo, in 1983.<sup>25</sup>

Strangely enough, until quite recently, the history of sculpture in Japan has usually been limited to the description and investigation of the Kamakura and Muromachi eras, to the neglect of the later periods (from the seventeenth century). The fate of the Meguro Buddha, fallen into oblivion for more than one hundred years in its native land, probably has something to do with this limitation of interest, which is closely related to the previously mentioned cross-purposes in the formative years of Japan's art history. Indeed the Law for the Protection of Old Temples and Shrines, put into effect in 1890, covered only those institutions with more than four hundred years of history since their foundation.

Since the Meiji period, bronzeware became an important export good, and pieces were purchased with enthusiasm by Western collectors. It was the decorative arts, along with *ukiyo-e* prints, that represented Japanese art for the Western eye. In its attempt to promote exports, the Japanese government made a special effort at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago to show the range of its art. Arguing that in Japan no substantial difference existed between decorative arts and fine arts, the Japanese delegation in Chicago urged the American organizer to classify the bronze works (such as *Hawks* by Suzuki Chōkichi, 1848–1919) not as decorative art but as sculpture belonging to the fine arts (along with some ceramics and lacquerware).

In the Paris Exposition in 1900, however, Japan clearly changed its policies and decided to follow faithfully the Western hierarchy of the fine arts. Almost simultaneously, a clear division of tasks made its appearance in the Japanese administration. While the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce had promoted the export of industrial arts, the preservation of Japanese art treasures now became the exclusive prerogative of the Ministry of the Imperial Household.

Hence, another cognitive gap developed between European views and the Japanese official view with regard to the differentiation of industrial bronze-

ware productions and European-type artistic sculptures. For example, while the wooden sculpture *The Old Monkey* by Takamura Kōun (1852–1934), exhibited at the Chicago Fair, is considered an epoch-making masterpiece in the history of modern Japanese sculpture, Suzuki Chōkichi's works have been categorized as arts and crafts and thus automatically excluded from the category of the fine arts.<sup>26</sup>

To conclude, I will formulate a final question. Between the *japonisant* interpretation of Hokusai as the greatest Japanese artist and Japan's official neglect—or between the *japonisant*'s high estimation of the Meguro Buddha and its total neglect by Japanese specialists—which view should we trust as authentic in discussing masters and masterpieces of Japanese art?

I think this is a misleading question, for the gap between the two is itself a cultural and historical product. Underneath the truth of the canon in history lies the historical making of the canon as a truth. The cognitive gap in the recognition of a Hokusai or the Meguro Buddha is no exception. The canonization of masters and masterpieces is by no means an ahistorical, true-or-false problem. We should rather recognize in this cognitive gap the historical importance of a Hokusai or the Meguro Buddha as a “sociological phenomena” (as Fenollosa put it), which we have to analyze in the international context of the hermeneutic debate on aesthetic evaluations.

Henri Focillon added a new preface to the second edition of his *Hokusai* in 1925. He wrote: “From the works of philosophers, poets and artists of all Asia, the Japanese Okakura rescued a continuity that is probably fictive but none the less ingenious as a structure; the continuity of an organic thinking, as a common heritage, constituting the patriotism of the continent encouraged by a race always in tension, holding their virtues tightly.”<sup>27</sup> Focillon was trying to reconcile the cognitive gap that I have been analyzing in this chapter. While following the French *japonisant* tradition with regard to Hokusai, at the same time Focillon found an affinity between his own idea of “*la famille spirituelle*” in art history and Okakura's vision of Asia as a fictional entity of the common consciousness.

The cognitive gap in the recognition of masters and masterpieces should be understood as a continuous mirror effect. Created by the crossing between the Western gaze and the Oriental response, masters and masterpieces in Japanese art are asked to play a role defined by the uncertain superimposition of the Western category of fine arts and the fictional identity of the Oriental.

11. Karaki Junzō, *Beruzu, Mōsu, Kēberu, Voshuban Shū*, MBZ, vol. 49, pp. 377–378.
12. Mori Ōgai, “Mōsō,” in *Ōgai Zenshū*, vol. 8, pp. 203–204.
13. See *Philosophen Lexicon*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1949), pp. 449–454.
14. Mori Ōgai, *Shinbiron*, in *Ōgai Zenshū*, vol. 21, p. 26.
15. See E. Hartmann, *Die deutsche Ästhetik seit Kant, Erster historischer-kritischer Theil der Ästhetik* (Berlin, 1887). See also M. Schasler, *Kritische Geschichte der Ästhetik, Grundlegung für die Ästhetik als Philosophie des Schönen und der Kunst* (Berlin, 1872).
16. *Ōgai Zenshū*, vol. 23, pp. 5–6.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 1–87.
18. See A. Schwegler, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Umriss-Ein Leitfaden zum Übersicht* (1887).

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1. Kitazawa Noriaki, *Me no Shinden* (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 1989). See also Nishikawa Nagao, “Nippongata Kokumin-Kokka no Keisei,” in *Bakumatsu Meijiki no Kokumin Kokka Keisei to Bunkabennyō* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1995).
2. Inaga Shigemi, “De l’Artisan à l’Artiste au Seuil de la Modernité Japonaise ou l’Implantation de la Notion de Beaux-Arts au Japon,” *Sociologie de l’Art* 8 (1995): 47–62; Inaga Shigemi, “Bijutsu no Tasha to Shite no Nihon, Nihon no Tasha to Shite no Bijutsu,” international symposium on *The Other in Art History*, December 1996 (forthcoming).
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4. Théodore Duret, “L’Art Japonais, les Livres Illustrés, les Albums Imprimés, Hokusai,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 2e pér., 1883, pp. 113 ff.; republished in Théodore Duret, *Critique d’Avant-garde* (Paris: Charpentier, 1885).
5. Louis Gonse, *L’Art Japonais* (Paris: Quintin, 1883), pp. 289–290, 270.
6. William Anderson, *The Pictorial Art in Japan* (London: Sampson Law, 1886), pp. 98–99.
7. *Ibid.*
8. I already presented portions of the following analysis in part 1 of my paper “Impressionist Aesthetics and Japanese Aesthetics, around a Controversy,” *Kyoto Conference on Japanese Studies*, International Research Center for Japanese Studies, vol. 3 (Kyoto: The Japan Foundation, 1994), pp. 307–319, although in a different context.
9. Ernest Fenollosa, “Review of the Chapter on Painting in *L’Art Japonais* by L. Gonse,” *The Japan Weekly Mail*, July 12, 1884.
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13. Yamaguchi Seiichi, *Fenorosa*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1982), pp. 267–276.
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(Tokyo: Hōsūkaku, 1893). On Philippe Burty, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *The Independent Critic, Philippe Burty and The Visual Arts of Mid-Nineteenth Century France* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993).

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20. Nōshōmushō, Kōhon Nippon Teikoku Bijutsu Ryakki (1901), French translation, Commission Impériale du Japon, *L’Histoire de l’Art du Japon*, trans. Emmanuel Tronquois (Paris: Maurice de Brunoff, 1900). For the English revised edition, see The Imperial Museum, *A History of Japanese Arts* (Tokyo: Ryūbun-kwan Publishing, 1913), where the section on “Architecture” is entirely separated and put at the end of the volume by Itō Chūta.

21. Takashina Erika, “Kuroda Seiki’s Portrait of Okakura Tenshin: New Light on the Inspiration and Theme of *Chi Kan Jō*,” *Bijutsushi* 139 45, no. 1 (1996): 31–43.

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## Chapter 12: Nature—the Naturalization of Experience as National

1. Arthur O. Lovejoy, “‘Nature’ as Aesthetic Norm,” in *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1948), p. 69.

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