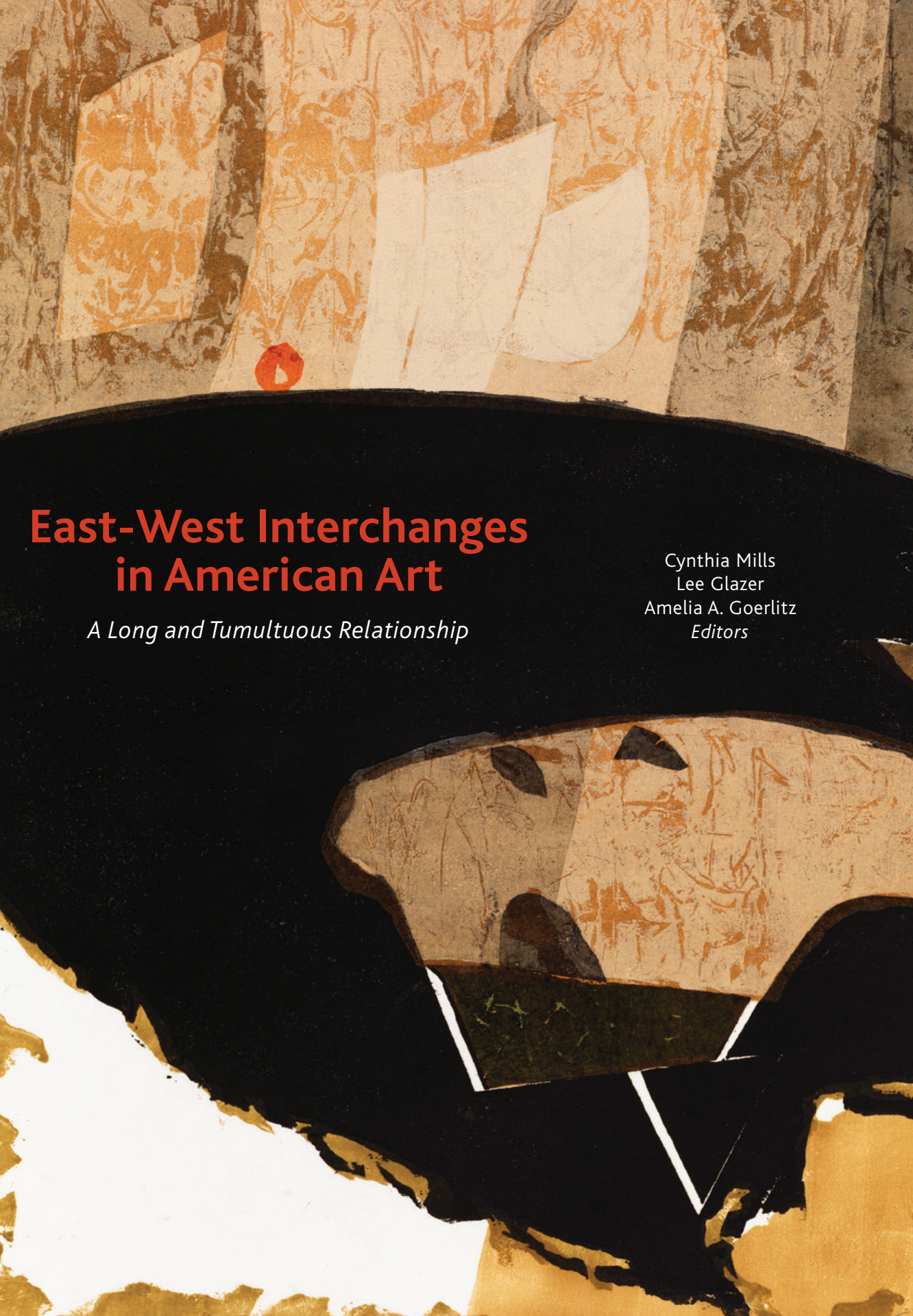

East-West Interchanges in American Art

A Long and Tumultuous Relationship

Cynthia Mills
Lee Glazer
Amelia A. Goerlitz
Editors

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Contents

Introduction 2
Cynthia Mills

Colonialism and Cosmopolitanism 19

Frameworks for Considering Cultural Exchange:
The Case of India and America 20
Partha Mitter

Destructive Creation:
The U.S.–Philippine Relationship in American Art 38
J. M. Mancini

Before Zen: The Nothing of American Dada 52
Jacquelynn Baas

Knowledge and Hierarchy 67

Global Knowledge in the Early Republic:
The East India Marine Society's "Curiosities" Museum 68
Patricia Johnston

Images of American Racial Stereotypes
in Nineteenth-Century Japan 80
Nicole Fabricand-Person

"A Semi-Chinese Picture":
Hubert Vos and the Empress Dowager of China 96
Virginia Anderson

Performing Identity 111

Overtly, Covertly, or Not at All:
Putting "Japan" in Japanese American Painting 112
Bert Winther-Tamaki

Chinese Painting Comes to America:
Zhang Shuqi and the Diplomacy of Art 126
Gordon H. Chang

New Negro on the Pacific Rim:
Sargent Johnson's Afro-Asian Sculptures 142
John P. Bowles

Encounters and Transference 159

"Gold Mine in Southeast Asia": Russel Wright,
Vietnamese Handicraft, and Transnational Consumption 160
Jennifer Way

ROCI East: Rauschenberg's Encounters in China 176
Hiroko Ikegami

Artistic Tropes: Some Cases of Mutual Chinese–American Influence 190
Ding Ning

Cultural Translation and Creative Misunderstanding
in the Art of Wenda Gu 204
David Cateforis

Curating Asia / America 215

Stories of the Beautiful: Narratives of East–West Interchange
at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery 216
Lee Glazer

From La Farge to Paik:
Research Resources at the Smithsonian American Art Museum 232
Amelia A. Goerlitz

Reflections on *The Third Mind* 248
Alexandra Munroe

Teaching American Art in East Asia 260
Eunyoung Cho

About the Authors 272

Index 276

Introduction

Cynthia Mills

In his book *The Asian American Century*, historian Warren Cohen describes how the world has witnessed in recent decades not only the Americanization of Asian cultures but also the Asianization of Americans' daily lives—from food to film, and from music to cars and medicine. Moreover, Asian Americans are a rapidly growing demographic group; population analysts predict that at least one in 10 U.S. residents will be of Asian heritage by the middle of the twenty-first century.[1]

These new realities continue and complicate the long-interwoven economic and political relationships of the United States and Asian nations. They also carry implications for scholars interested in the history of American art, which has in the past focused on such questions as what qualities of U.S. art are distinctly "American" and what lines of influence can be traced to European forebears across the Atlantic Ocean. Today scholars of the visual arts are constructing an expanded field, one in which they see "American art" as an amalgam of many influences and currents, and consider the plural nature of an America made up of more diverse populations. In crossing both national and disciplinary boundaries to achieve their goals, they are contributing to an international turn in American art scholarship. While scholars continue to raise many questions about U.S. artists' interchanges with Europe—the subject of most of the work done to date on transnational exchange—they also, partly in response to our real-world concerns, are expressing a greater, more multifarious interest in our growing connections with Asia. This was the subject of the Smithsonian's 2009 conference A Long and Tumultuous Relationship: East–West Interchanges in American Art, which was organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum in

partnership with the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery as well as the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program, with the generous support of the Terra Foundation for American Art. This book of proceedings, co-edited with Lee Glazer and Amelia A. Goerlitz, brings together papers from the symposium that offer new avenues for research on Asian–U.S. artistic exchange.

The contributors to this volume—art historians, curators, and historians from Britain, China, Ireland, Japan, and Korea as well as the United States—provide an array of perspectives. Each essay explores some aspect of the many ways in which American and Asian artists have interacted from the eighteenth century to the present day and considers some of the specific locations where these interchanges took place. A key point of the conference and of this volume is to demonstrate through the presentation of provocative and original research that artistic ideas did not flow primarily in one direction (from Asia to the United States—or as Beijing scholar Ding Ning notes, from the country with the longer history to the newer culture), but rather that they circulated through a variety of dynamic international relationships—sometimes personal, sometimes commercial or governmental, philosophical or pedagogical. In addition, the essays included here discuss an expanded geography of contact zones (including, for example, not only the Pacific Northwest, China, and Japan, but also India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Salem, Massachusetts) in an attempt to enrich and complicate our understandings of these ever-shifting global relationships. They engage a wide range of media, including postcards, magazines, handicrafts, and buildings as well as "high art" forms. Cross-racial themes emerge at home and abroad, and strategies used by artists and viewers to envision and construct identities, both of self and other, are discussed.

The results of the symposium as laid out in this book are exciting and eclectic, with participants not offering any one coherent narrative but struggling with the vastness and diversity of the many Easts that exist and of America itself. Some of the work presented is in a preliminary stage and will be developed further over time. The organizers did not in general select papers that give priority to the immigrant experience, another broad area where considerable research is under way today, but sought instead a range of approaches to transnational interchange in a variety of places, with the hope of provoking a productive dialogue for the future.[2] Some of these come together visually in Theodore Wores's compelling 1881 painting *The Chinese Fishmonger* (Figure 1), which was chosen to grace the cover of the conference program and website. Here an American-born artist who had just completed years of training in Munich found a window on multiple global currents in San Francisco's busy Chinatown, where he painted with careful dignity a fishmonger engaged in a picturesque act of daily commerce—an Asian with whom he had made actual

1. Theodore Wores, *The Chinese Fishmonger*, 1881. Oil on canvas, 34 3/4 × 46 1/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of Drs. Ben and A. Jess Shenson.

contact. Wores focused much of his effort on a still life of the fish of many colors that the man was selling, their glistening forms adding to a sense of the exoticism, richness, profitability, and riskiness of the Pacific Ocean passage. At the same time the unreadable Chinese characters in the picture make clear the utter foreignness, the cultural and linguistic gulf, that existed even for someone as earnest in his project and knowledgeable about San Francisco's Chinatown since childhood as Wores, who later traveled to Japan to seek further subjects directly on Asian soil.

While eclecticism and a diversity of ideas and methodologies as well as images reigned at the Smithsonian conference (Figure 2), some linking themes did emerge in the talks and discussions that may help set the stage for the essays presented in this book, and I summarize these here.

Why now? Gordon H. Chang, a historian at Stanford University, challenged colleagues to answer the question of why so many threads have come together to highlight interest in Asian and American artistic interchange now, at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, when less interest was evinced by scholars even a few years earlier. A number of books, exhibitions, and conferences demonstrate that shift.[3] Respondents described the intensification of interest as being one part of a broader effort to reconceive American history in a globalized age, where since the 1990s the Internet and other forms of technology allow an ease and

2. Panelists at East–West Interchanges in American Art symposium, on stage at the Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC, 2 October 2009.

instantaneity of communication and a new mobility, and commercial ventures and nations' economies around the world are more tightly intertwined. The contemporary art world, too, is more interrelated. Today it is made up of global fairs with the artist as a truly international, nomadic figure who moves easily from Cologne to Venice to Beijing and Shanghai and has studios in multiple places.

In general, Asia seems closer and larger, and at the same time more complex and varied than many Americans have understood. Events there more frequently and directly touch Americans' lives. It was not by chance that the first foreign leader to visit President Obama's White House in 2009 was Taro Aso, the prime minister of Japan, or that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's first official trip was to China and other Asian nations, not Europe. The economic ascension of China has made its policies about environmental protection, individual rights, and trade regular front-page headline content for U.S. newspapers.[4]

While nineteenth-century Americans could primarily relate to their European ancestors, the demography of the nation and "what looks like America" has shifted dramatically to include people from many more geographic points of origin. People of Asian heritage now make up more than four percent of the U.S. population, and 2000 census figures indicate a pattern of rapid future growth in this rate that will contribute to changing the very definition of what it is to be an American.[5] Today an increasing number of professors and influence-makers are Americans of Asian descent whose personal heritage may inspire added interest in questions of historic interchange.

Interest in Asian American cultural encounters is not new. Asian imports in terms of merchandise, artistic styles, and ideas have always been one aspect of our study of American art, from the colonists' use of chinaware from the East to the public passion for things Japanese in the late nineteenth century, Orientalist paintings of the Gilded Age, and the attraction to ideas derived from Zen Buddhism for twentieth-century artists. Much of the historical interest has been in ceramics, textiles, and other "decorative" arts from China and Japan (Figure 3) as well as works on paper, and late-nineteenth-century Japonisme influenced by these objects and prints

has been an especially large area of study. Curator Alexandra Munroe, who organized a large 2009 exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum entitled *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, pointed out that scholars' attention in the past tended, however, to be focused on a limited number of incidents of interchange of occasional relevance to American art, and on certain artists—such as James McNeill Whistler, Isamu Noguchi, or Franz Kline. "The loosening of our bonds of inheritance from Europe has been a cumulative process of liberation and analysis," Munroe noted. The taste of U.S. audiences, collectors, and artists for Asian art or Asian-influenced art has risen or ebbed at times amid changing national political and military relations, from the opening of Japan by Commodore Perry in the 1850s to the American colonization of the Philippine islands in 1898, to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Vietnam War, but it has never disappeared. Thus some of today's cultural interest is a matter of degree, evincing a new intensity of attention and a widening of that regard. Some of what is new is expressed in the kind of terminology we use.

The nature of scholarly interests has shifted. Travel, for example, has long been an interest of scholars of American landscape painting, an area of study that was at the heart of the field in the 1970s and '80s. Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made many risky journeys across the Atlantic and traversed regions of their own country by horse, stagecoach, and eventually railroad, and in the twentieth century they began venturing into outer space. But the frequency, ease, reach, and sometimes the function of travel today are unlike anything in the past. Thus scholarly conferences center on such terms as "transnational" or "transcultural," "unboundedness," "circumnavigation" and the "circulation of objects" via cargo routes, "decentering," "center versus periphery," "cultural transfer" or "cultural translation and transmission," "hybridity," and "cosmopolitanism"—all recognizing the contemporary concerns of a more mobile, multidirectional world (often a world of commerce) and blurring the former scholarly emphasis on nationhood in favor of a more multicultural, transnational, and dynamic history. Anthony W. Lee, a moderator at our symposium, summed up some of today's views and interests in commenting that we now understand that there are many "Easts" and "Wests," and that nation-states come and go, with regions at times independent and at other times not, subject to both Eastern and Western imperialisms. These regions produce immigrants and migrants at different times and rates in a Pacific Rim diasporic world in which they are connected to each other by "different forms of desire—all of which demand different modes of attention and interpretation and respect to historical conditions of contact," Lee added.[6]

Traffic in goods across the seas has been discussed in studies of American colonial art and architecture for many decades, but until recently tended to be considered

3. Ruth Payne Burgess, *Green Chinese Jar*, 1924. Oil on canvas, 24 1/8 × 16 1/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of John Gellatly.

primarily in terms of British influence or resistances to that influence. Most early studies of American art centered on the East Coast and on the art of four cities: New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston, which looked east across the Atlantic. For many reasons, including the shift of the U.S. population to the West and Southwest, there is increasing national interest in art of California and the Pacific Rim, with its larger Asian population and interest in commerce across the "other" ocean.

Another shift in interest that is inspiring fresh scholarship is in the arena of medium. Easel painting has long been at the heart of the academic study of historical American art, from colonial portraiture to landscape painting to modernist and abstract productions, with sculpture another line of consideration, especially after the rise of Minimalism. Asian artworks, though attractive and interesting, were sometimes seen as lesser in terms of content because they were associated with decorative or graphic arts. As a look at the images reproduced in this book makes clear, our authors needed to consider formats such as handicrafts, magazine illustrations, postcards, maps, and architecture to make many essential connections about U.S.–Asian artistic interchanges. These forms are part of our contemporary visual life, rapidly being incorporated into the study of American art as the old "canon" of high art is being expanded or dismantled.

Scholars familiar with related disciplines such as literary theory, anthropology, linguistics, and gender studies also are not interested in seeking single overriding narratives or patterns to reveal characteristics about American art or Asian art. They

are instead searching for ways to reveal nuances and tangled networks of interests and interaction. They seek, though not always successfully, to set aside national or ethnic stereotypes and assumptions of cultural superiority, and are looking for ways to understand the complexity of exchange—of give and take, of the circulation and mutation of goods, ideas, cultural forms, and identity formations—and of the relationship between these and imperialism and power.

Strategies. When American scholars looked eastward in the past, they often considered Asian influence on art of the United States as a unidirectional and limited development, suggesting that Asian culture was monolithic and unchanging while characterizing American artists as dynamic and original in their ability to absorb and meld the best of diverse global outlooks. In fact, American artists went to Asia for a variety of reasons, but usually they were seeking something—be it profit, power, exoticism, ideas, or ways to resist European artistic traditions with alternative approaches. And, perhaps unbeknownst to them, they were also bringing something new home and not understanding the power and shape of how it would be received. Bert Winther-Tamaki, in writing about encounters between nation states has thus referred to the "contentious interdependency" born out of a long and tumultuous relationship between East and West.[7] Organizers adopted his phrase as part of the conference title and used it to suggest a less simple, less dual or oppositional relationship—one in which changes in power relations and social relations occurred over a long period of time, with many players, and without permanent winners or losers.

Contributors to these proceedings, in seeking ways to avoid privileging one group's capacities or perspectives, follow a general cross-disciplinary shift in recent decades of talking about "encounters" between peoples rather than "discoveries" by one nation's people of another's world, perceived as less highly "civilized," as Nicole Fabricand-Person discusses in her essay here. A well-known museum exhibition that attempted to take these notions into account was *Circa 1492*, organized at the National Gallery of Art in Washington in 1991–92 on the anniversary of the sailing of the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. Instead of celebrating the heroism of one individual, Christopher Columbus, for his "discovery" of America, that show, for example, featured hundreds of artworks, maps and scientific instruments, and decorative objects from five continents in a survey of the world's visual culture around 1492, including a section titled *Toward Cathay* featuring works from Japan, Korea, China, and India. Textbooks that once consisted of a series of accounts of heroic individual artists or other achievers also have moved away from the "great man" model to a chapter structure of geographic locations and time periods or a thematic organization.[8]

Many of the authors in this collection similarly adopt the notion of a "contact zone"—a site where artists or ideas meet in one moment in time, or episodically—to structure their investigations and to avoid privileging unduly the Western perspective. Partha Mitter discusses this idea in his opening essay, which proposes some conceptual frameworks and useful terms for considering exchange and its consequences. For Mitter, as for many of our contributors, visual and material cultures are not merely byproducts of encounters, but have helped to shape the kinds of interaction that can occur in contact zones, both physical and virtual. Indeed, in an expansive view of the term outlined by moderator Anthony W. Lee at the conference, a spectrum of contact zones might be considered: ranging from locales where actual meetings took place to texts or other cultural artifacts that mediated cross-cultural interchange (as in the essays appearing here by Mitter, Jacquelynn Baas, and Munroe) and even deeply personal interchanges that occurred in Asia (such as the encounters with artists described by Ding Ning and by Hiroko Ikegami). In his brief examination of cultural connections and borrowings between the U.S. and India, Mitter deploys the notion of virtual contact zones to describe a dialogical relationship that has operated largely outside of, or beyond, the discourse of Western imperial ambition. He seeks to demonstrate that power relations are one part of the discussion of interchange, but not the only element. Even within a discourse of mutuality, however, historically real imbalances of power remain in many instances. As historian J. M. Mancini reminds us, contact zones can also be sites of "destructive creation." This is especially true when, as in her essay on aspects of the U.S. presence in the Philippines, visual transformations—from holiday rituals to schoolchildren's production of embroidery—are part and parcel of a colonialist political agenda. In other instances, a contact zone might be more purely intellectual, based on the adaptation of an idea. This is the situation described in Baas's account of how Taoism may have enabled American Dadaists to subvert existing aesthetic and philosophical hierarchies.

One of the most fundamental aspects of Asian American contact that surfaced in our conference is the way in which new knowledge of foreign cultures can reshape how we see ourselves in relation to other peoples, in a hierarchy reinforced by visual imagery and collections of artifacts. Interest in the circulation of objects in commerce and in the transformative experience of ocean-crossing has encouraged the study of eighteenth-century American art in a global context, as Patricia Johnston's essay shows. Johnston discusses how Salem, Massachusetts, ship captains brought home items such as ostrich eggs and miniature pagodas from the Orient and proudly displayed them in a museum to showcase knowledge of exotic cultures and the captains' own expanded worldview. Virginia Anderson explains how a cosmopolitan

artist in the early twentieth century headed to China to paint the empress dowager and brought back to Boston a portrait that is a hybrid of visual traditions, a product of his own crossings of national borders and cultures. Fabricand-Person describes how derogatory images of Native Americans and blacks reached a Japan newly opened to the West, affecting not only Japanese conceptions of these American "others," but also the ways in which Japanese people conceptualized themselves anthropologically vis-à-vis peoples of the West.

In the twentieth century, cosmopolitanism seems to have encouraged a refashioning of identity, often by deliberately invoking or repressing visual signifiers associated with aspects of ethnicity. In his essay here, Winther-Tamaki analyzes American art audiences' search for qualities of "Asian-ness" in works by four Asian American artists, and how the creation and reception of their artworks was bound up with familial and generational demands. Gordon Chang discusses how a Chinese artist (his father) came to America in the 1940s and through live demonstrations and even films educated the U.S. public about Chinese art—so that his performances across the country became mobile contact zones between cultures. John P. Bowles of the University of North Carolina discusses a Bay-area African American artist's adoption of a multicultural identity and the artist's related interest in Asian themes.

A number of the papers, including the discussion of craft production in South Vietnam by Jennifer Way and the consideration of contemporary art by Wenda Gu offered by scholar David Cateforis, consider the transmission of influences and ideas and how they can circle back over time in what Way calls a "feedback loop of production and consumption." In the transference of designs for craft objects made by Vietnamese refugees as well as the words Wenda Gu uses in his art, meanings don't stand still and influences go in multiple directions no matter what the intention. Hiroko Ikegami's look at Robert Rauschenberg's ROCI China project also shows how misunderstandings or miscommunications can occur when there is a "cultural time lag" in their artistic development. Ding Ning illustrates the often surprising transmission of styles, such as the impact of American painter Andrew Wyeth's work on a group of Chinese painters after the Cultural Revolution.

An expanded scholarly field has altered approaches to teaching and museum exhibitions as well, underscored here in Korean scholar Eunyoung Cho's description of her pedagogical approach and Munroe's account of *The Third Mind*. Essays by co-editors Lee Glazer and Amelia A. Goerlitz offer information on the collections and array of resources at the Smithsonian for the burgeoning study of East–West interchanges.

There are still many barriers to East–West scholarship. While today's scholars talk of seeking multiple perspectives in discussions of cross-border dialogues, they acknowledge that it does not seem possible to equally access the views of

4. Page from Isabella Stewart Gardner travel album showing surf boats in Madras, India. From Alan Chong and Noriko Murai, with Christine Guth, *Journeys East: Isabella Stewart Gardner and Asia* (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2009), 319.

all historical audiences for these exchanges, especially in studies of reception. Language barriers, cultural differences, lack of expertise or of access to archives stand in the way of any genuine, truly equal exchange.

For most scholars of American art, Asia has always appeared to be a more alien place than "Old Europe," and U.S. interest in Asian art has been inevitably selective. From my own limited experience, crossing into Asia can present the novice American traveler with a new status perhaps not fully comprehended before arrival—abrupt classification as a "Westerner." This sense of personal otherness was both prized and denigrated by Gilded Age visitors, who often simplified their experiences and converted their observations into something more comfortable and familiar. In late-nineteenth-century Japan, American artist John La Farge studied a painting by the Zen priest Mu Ch'i of a *bodhisattva*, or intermediary Buddhist deity, and in his mind and description converted the figure into an Asian parallel to the "Holy Virgin" in an attempt to understand it and, in his view, to honor it.[9] Isabella Stewart Gardner, touring the Orient in search of the picturesque, led an "Anglo-Oriental" life of ease on her trip in 1883. "A small Cambodian fans me as I write—naked to the waist," she wrote from Indochina; "our life is a very lazy, deliciously lazy one," she added from Bombay (Mumbai), describing visits to temples, "tiffins" (meals), and siestas as well as other strange and picturesque sights but failing to mention the violence of poverty she surely also had witnessed. In Yokohama, she wrote a friend, "We are leading a perfect holiday life . . . [W]e have drunk gallons of canary colored tea out of their dear little cups and have eaten pounds of sweets, as we three have sprawled about on the soft, clean mats, in the funny little shops, looking at curios. If the Japanese were only handsomer they would be perfect."[10] Gardner filled

albums with photographs acquired on her excursions of selective scenes that matched her preconceived interests (Figure 4). As Eunyoung Cho describes it, something a bit similar occurs for East Asian students of American art, as their interests in things American are also piqued and circumscribed by certain cultural tendencies and expectations based on prior experience.

How can Americanist scholars be less "Western-centric"? Sarah Burns of Indiana University commented during a discussion at the conference that, despite real efforts, Western scholars still labor under their own "habits of cultural imperialism," noting that even the papers at the East–West conference continued to demonstrate the "uneven rate of cultural exchange" and perceived authority. She said one way for scholars to begin to bypass their own ingrained perceptions might be to try to "defamiliarize our own culture, to try to become anthropologists of ourselves, to take a more critical and distant view." Winther-Tamaki agreed that Americanist scholars "trying to give voice to the other" need to ask "whether or not there is a balance; or if we're shy of that balance and haven't represented it properly or satisfactorily, how did we fail to attain it?" Patricia Johnston suggested that collaborative work in teams of specialists, including those more expert in Asian art, may be most effective. Otherwise individual scholars cannot be expected to break barriers of language and expertise, and cross the gulf in cultural perceptions to better understand "how these [visual] forms change as they go between." International teaching exchanges were also suggested to allow faculty members to learn about the culture of a host country.

Can images, the special precinct of this study, transcend barriers such as geographic, linguistic, and cultural boundaries because of their special visual, nonlinguistic attributes? That was one area of exploration of this symposium and of these collected essays. One thing we have been learning, however, is that the way in which images are received in another culture is often different than the understanding or intention of the transmitting artist. Sometimes the transmission of an image is not a deliberate gift, but happens in modes such as magazine circulation, again with unexpected results.

Language remains a huge barrier and, because of the many languages that are spoken in Asia, translation is not an easy solution. In addition, Professor Ding noted that there does not seem to have been to date as much demand for translations of books about American art history in China, for example, as for volumes about American popular culture or about European art and artists (which are sometimes made available via translation grants from European governments, such as France).

The utility and impact of descriptive terminology too must be reconsidered. The very term "East–West," adopted for this conference and book, has often been critiqued. While it is frequently used (and retained here) as a shortform means

5. Installation view of *The Third Mind,* Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photo by David Heald, courtesy The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

to communicate a conversation or exchange between Asian and European/American peoples, its terms suggest monocultures. And its hyphenated form allows the implicit suggestion that there is a mere oppositional dichotomy, that things can be reduced to a simple binary—something considered problematic in today's scholarly discussions—and that power relations or exchange occur on an equal and symmetrical basis. In fact, the art work discussed here and the broader intellectual framework of the discussion do ultimately question the easy rubrics of "East" and "West," Asia and the United States without dismantling them.

Conclusion

Any conference, or book, is constrained by logistical limitations; one can only have so many speakers or hours, or essays, and so ours, like others, had many "blind spots" or absences. As Winther-Tamaki noted at the conference, "There was [always] inevitably a greater market [in the West] for some kinds of Asian art and ideas than others." In concluding remarks, he spoke of an avoidance in most of these papers of discussions of "violence," for example, between nations and peoples. There was also an absence of discussions of Orientalism and gender, one of the most established areas of past scholarship but one that may need to be reassessed with twenty-first-century models. While speakers talked about the "many Asias," most papers still attended primarily to East Asia. Clearly this symposium just skimmed the surface. Much work needs to be done on specific artists who immigrated to the United States, conferees agreed, and on the experiences of Americans who lived, worked, or traveled in Asia. Chang particularly called for a "deeper investigation of individual artists, styles, and schools, both here and in Asia" as well as discussions of the roles of museums, art history departments, galleries, and dealers, in furthering artistic exchange, and the significance of artistic interaction in international relations.

What's next? What alternatives are there to an older model of seeing Asia as something merely superficial, not integral, to America's interests—as a site and culture of only episodic relevance to the development of American art? The Guggenheim exhibition *The Third Mind* (Figure 5) demonstrated the vastness and weight of Asia's intellectual and philosophical influence over a long arc of American art, offering an alternative model to the more usual story of European influence. In recent books and at our conference, we have learned that there are Easts and Wests so diverse and unmanageable in scope that we could often only begin to explore a few aspects by looking at specific moments frozen in time, at some specific places, events, and themes, and hope to investigate some of these further through increased collaborative efforts over time.

To some extent, these papers confirm the power of images to transcend boundaries as well as artistic intentions, and affirm that art historians, curators, and historians working with visual materials have something distinctive to offer in the study of international cultural exchanges. As we begin the twenty-first century, the United States and its culture can no longer "be considered products exclusively of Western civilization," Warren Cohen concluded in his book *The Asian American Century*, citing the impact of increasing contacts with Asia.[11] Despite the constraints of time, space, and language, scholarship about the history of art should strive in the ideal for the wealth and complexity of real history and engagement with real people and events. The papers compiled here, though eclectic, begin to give us some ways of complicating the issues and looking at our changing world through a wide spectrum of colors and through many shades of gray.

Acknowledgments

The organizers thank the Terra Foundation for American Art for its generosity in funding this conference, which is the second in a series of five Terra Symposia on American Art in a Global Context, and for supporting this publication. The Foundation's work has enabled scholarly exchange across national borders in the form not only of symposia but also exhibitions, fellowships, and publications. Elizabeth Broun, director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, introduced the conference and gave consistent and generous support to its organization. Franklin Odo, former director of the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American program, advised and aided, and opened the second day's proceedings. Joann Moser, senior curator of graphic arts at the American Art Museum, also helped shape the conference as part of initial discussions. Jacquelynn Baas, Gordon H. Chang, Anthony W. Lee, and Bert Winther-Tamaki served on an advisory panel. In addition, the conference included talks and related tours by Jennifer Sorkin, then a doctoral candidate at Yale University; David Hogge and Rachael

Woody at the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives; Alice Stewart in Washington's Chinatown; and John Hanhardt, senior curator for media arts at the American Art Museum, on the art of Korean-born artist Nam June Paik. Artist William T. Wiley participated, leading a gallery tour of a retrospective exhibition of his work at the American Art Museum, during which he and Moser talked about his enduring interest in Zen Buddhism. Ginger Strader and Deborah Stultz of the Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press helped us immeasurably through the process of preparing our manuscript. Interns Mary McMahon and Phoebe Hillemann ably performed fact-checking and proofreading of manuscripts at an initial stage, and Elizabeth Shook assisted with proofreading the index.

Notes

1. Warren I. Cohen, *The Asian American Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), based on a series of Reischauer lectures delivered at Harvard University in 2000.

2. On Asian American art, see such recent examples as Gordon H. Chang, Mark Dean Johnson, and Paul J. Karlstrom, eds., *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), and for contemporary art Daniel Cornell and Mark Dean Johnson, *Asian/American/Modern Art: Shifting Currents, 1900–1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). Collaborative projects at Stanford University and at New York University and the University of Connecticut have worked to recover the achievements of Asian American artists. According to Chang (xxii, note 1), the term "Asian American" was coined in 1968 at the start of academia's burgeoning interest in ethnic studies.

3. See, for example, Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, the catalogue of the 2009 exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and a response, Seth McCormick et al., "Exhibition as Proposition: Responding Critically to *The Third Mind*," *Art Journal* (Fall 2009): 31–49. The published proceedings of a symposium entitled *Inventing Asia, American Perceptions and Influences around 1900*, organized by Noriko Murai and Alan Chong at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, are forthcoming. U.S. and Asian museums have formed partnerships, as in the case of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and its sister museum in Nagoya, Japan. There is a growing body of literature on some Asian American artists; see, for instance, ShiPu Wang, "Japan against Japan: U.S. Propaganda and Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Identity Crisis," in the journal *American Art* (doi: 10.1086/587915), and a dissertation in progress at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, by Midori Yamamura on Yayoi Kusama. For wide-ranging examples of recent scholarship, see John Clark, *Japanese Exchanges in Art 1850s–1930s: with Britain, Continental Europe, and the USA* (Sydney: Power Publications, 2007); Christine Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Christopher Benfey, *The Great Wave: Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics, and the Opening of Old Japan* (New York: Random House Paperbacks, 2004); and Julia Meech, *Frank Lloyd Wright and the Art of Japan: The Architect's Other Passion* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001).

4. Clinton delivered her first major speech as secretary of state at the Asia Society in New York on 13 February 2009, where she discussed China policy on the eve of her trip to China and other Asian nations. See Mark Landler, "Clinton Seeks Shift on China and Stresses Engagement," *New York Times*, 14 February 2009.

5. "The Asian Population: 2000. Census 2000 Brief," www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-16.pdf. In his *The Asian American Century*, 4, Warren Cohen predicts, "In a few years there will be more Buddhists than Jews in the United States and one in ten Americans will be of Asian ancestry."

6. Anthony W. Lee's complete comments as moderator, as well as those of all speakers, can be seen on the symposium webcast, www.americanart.si.edu/research/symposia/2009/webcast/.

7. Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 4.

8. In Angela Miller et al., *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), xii, a recent textbook, the authors declare their intent to focus on the theme of innovation and encounter, which they define as "[e]ncounter not only among traditions, but between fine arts and commercial mass media, as well as among alternative versions of American identity."

9. The incident is described by Ernest Fenollosa in his *Epochs of Chinese & Japanese Art* (New York: Frederick Stokes Co., 1921), 249–50.

10. Alan Chong and Noriko Murai, with Christine Guth, *Journeys East: Isabella Stewart Gardner and Asia* (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2009), 246, 371, 123, 122, 186. While the European grand tour has been well studied, much more is to be done, especially in English, on Americans' ventures to Asia.

11. Cohen, *The Asian American Century*, 126.

Colonialism and Cosmopolitanism

Frameworks for Considering Cultural Exchange

The Case of India and America

Partha Mitter

Debates on the interface between East and West and the problematic nature of cultural exchanges have taken on fresh urgency today because of the increasing globalization of culture. From film and popular illustration to high-art installations and architecture (Figure 1), American and Asian visual productions are increasingly intertwined. Our period has witnessed an unprecedented proliferation in transcultural conversation, made possible by the late-twentieth-century revolution in communication technology. One of the main anxieties in this era of relentless cultural mixing is this question: are we in danger of becoming a homogeneous mass and losing the cultural diversity that makes humanity so interesting? Just as in the field of bioscience where diversity of species is essential for ecological balance, so too in the cultural arena must we preserve our differences, within our borders and beyond them.[1]

Comparable in many ways to the spread of multinational conglomerates, the world market in art has reached enormous proportions, as represented by monster art auctions and biennales, which now welcome artists from outside Europe and America. While the inclusion of artists from regions that were previously considered to be peripheries is commendable, there is a disquieting aspect to it. It is predicated on the uniformity of taste and aims of these mega-institutions and events that reach all the way from the extreme east to the westernmost corner of the globe, say, from Beijing to Dublin. What may appear to be inclusive may actually be the hold of the Western modernist canon, which tends to undermine local voices and practices, destroying the polyphony of expressions. The social Darwinian survival of the fittest in the art canon contains its own inherent predicament.[2]

1. Louis I. Kahn, National Assembly Building, view from the west, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo by Shahidul Alam/Drik/Majority World.

These recent developments force us to ask: in what ways can we study cultural encounters and exchanges of the past, and can this ever be a neutral exercise? In this exploratory study I seek to foreground the theoretical underpinnings of cultural interfaces and offer pointers to further conceptual explorations of the American relationship with Asian cultures, taking as my case study the history of interchange between the United States and India.

The period of "tumultuous relationship" between Europe and Asia falls roughly between the late eighteenth century and the present. It lies at the heart of Western colonial expansion, followed by decolonization. This is an era that is characterized by an unequal power relationship between Europe and the rest of the world, traces of whose legacy remain. When considering the East–West transmission of ideas in this period, it is tempting to regard the Westernization of non-Western countries as the inevitable unfolding of Hegelian logic, persuading one to focus on the flow of ideas from Europe to countries like India as the single source of the modern there.

On the other hand, the West's discovery and use of Asian philosophies and artistic forms is deemed valuable primarily because of their perceived minor role in contributing to the evolution of "Western modernity." "Even in times characterized by the globalization of culture there still remains an endemic Eurocentrism," the intellectual historian J. J. Clarke has thoughtfully observed, "a persistent reluctance to accept that the West could ever have borrowed anything of significance from the East, or to see the place of Eastern thought within the Western tradition as

much more than a recent manifestation, evanescent and intellectually lightweight, at best only a trivial part of a wider reaction against the modern world."[3] Behind this reluctance is the power and authority of the European knowledge system that is closely bound up with the prevailing geopolitical configuration. To make the transition from historical determinism to a new way of thinking, I admit, is no easy task. To pull out of this Western bias in cultural analysis, we need to revise afresh our intellectual assumptions with a view to defining the flow of global culture not as a linear process but as multiple criss-crossings of ideas that flow in different directions, including historical and contemporary exchanges between America and Asia, in which a genuine reciprocity is evident.

The superstructure of modern historical scholarship, including art history, rests essentially on Western epistemic foundations, a scholarship that inevitably fell prey to the body of representations created through European expansion from the eighteenth century. Take art history for instance: it claims Kantian disinterested objectivity in evaluating the finer qualities of works of art irrespective of their cultural origins. Yet since the nineteenth century the established tradition of scholarship on Asian art has rested on the implied superiority of the Western artistic canon vis-à-vis all other traditions. In 1977, my work *Much Maligned Monsters* questioned such optimistic formulation of the universal principles of art. Johann Joachim Winckelmann's dictum on the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" of Greek art, I argued, had a detrimental effect on art-historical discourse, indirectly contributing to the distortion of Indian and other non-Western art in colonial art history.[4]

The collective, and frequently negative, images of non-Western art were shared in other spheres of knowledge. Edward Said used the term "Orientalism" to describe the "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[5] The analysis of colonial discourse as a discipline produced a rich crop of committed scholarship that made a lasting impact on the academic scene. The relationship between representation, power, and authority studied by post-colonial scholars helped set up the ground rules for the new cultural studies. Though by no means the sole approach to the subject, the importance of post-structuralist deconstruction in these developments cannot be gainsaid.

While one must now acknowledge the racist ideological component of colonial representations, I would nonetheless argue that American encounters with India amounted to something more than an assortment of collective European myths and stereotypes. As I hope to show, encounters between India and the United States

were a product of reciprocity that marked the passage of ideas in both directions. For example, an engaging intellectual tradition in the United States—Transcendentalism—emerged in the nineteenth century owing in part to the American discovery of ancient Indian thought—a striking case study of how cultures flow across national boundaries. Even if the relationship between the United States and colonized India in the nineteenth century was of necessity an asymmetrical one, we cannot dismiss this intellectual discovery on the part of American thinkers simply as a manifestation of the colonial discourse of difference.

I must voice a note of caution, however, in viewing such cultural flows as a form of global interconnectedness, because there is the danger of viewing such relationships in anodyne, celebratory terms as a precursor to present-day multiculturalism. I am acutely aware that such encounters are uneven, and often take place between unequal partners. In addition, just as we have learned that the East is not a monolithic entity, much post-colonial theory has failed to recognize the shifting distinctions that characterize the variety of Western cultures (even in the diverse interior regions of the United States) that interact with Asia. Bearing this in mind, I will seek to highlight the essentially dialectical nature of cultural border crossings, with each culture seeking out those precise elements that resonate with its own preoccupations, in other words, with its own cultural imaginary.

If we are to produce more inflected readings of global encounters in the colonial era, what possible approaches can we adopt? Mary Louise Pratt's notion of contact zones offers us some particularly useful lessons. She defines a contact zone as "as a space of colonial encounters, the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict." Pratt does not discount the role of power in such transactions. In this she is at one with other post-colonial scholars. But what interests me in her approach is that it allows for the possibility of a more productive relationship between cultures as a species of encounter, exchange, and negotiation. This becomes clear in her next passage: "I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination . . . [and their] copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power."[6]

Power naturally has a certain purchase in our study of cross-cultural intellectual exchanges. Yet it does not quite explain the true nature of this cosmopolitan imaginary, namely how ideas cross borders and what happens to them when they begin their afterlives in other cultures. The second idea I wish to introduce in this context is the notion of cosmopolitanism itself, a notion used in multiple ways,

which furnishes us with another related working tool. I introduce cosmopolitanism in the full knowledge of the dangers of using this controversial term. The classic meaning of the cosmopolitan is someone who is able to transcend his parochial locus to become a world citizen. Within the transcultural framework of present globalization, the term offers some useful means of understanding modern population movements and cultural intersections.

The term cosmopolitanism is meant to counter pessimism about the possibility of fruitful cultural exchanges amid the morass of power politics. Its most eloquent champion is the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, who injects a much-needed ethical dimension to the globalization debate. Appiah views cosmopolitan values as the thread that ties human beings together, rejecting identity politics and the "majoritarian" nationalist claims to an exclusivist cultural patrimony. He makes a persuasive case for everyone's right to share the common human heritage, regardless of race, gender, and orientation, placing his faith in the individual's ability to overcome narrow parochialism and aspire for world citizenship.[7] While Appiah's Aristotelian universalism offers a welcome corrective to the politics of difference, it does not address power and authority that confer visibility and inclusion in the uneven relationship between center and periphery. Craig Calhoun mounts a powerful critique of what he terms the extreme and abstract view of cosmopolitanism as an autonomous entity. Not only does such cosmopolitanism camouflage privilege, he says, it fails to appreciate the importance of solidarity, especially for those who are bereft of power. A more limited and political cosmopolitanism that accommodates difference and hybridity may make a more effective engine of global change.[8]

Taking cosmopolitanism as a working hypothesis, I would like to extend its scope in the global circulation of information. In this context we may take Mary Louise Pratt's concept of social space a little further and in a somewhat different direction. A novel "social space" that opened up in the wake of the worldwide spread of print capitalism during the colonial era helped to introduce ideas of the Enlightenment to regions outside Europe. Benedict Anderson has argued in connection with the rise of nationalism that print culture created imagined communities whose members had no direct contact with one another but shared a social or intellectual space.[9] In my 2007 book, *The Triumph of Modernism*, I sought to extend Anderson's concept of the imagined community to the global level. In the era of European expansion, the transmission of knowledge between center and periphery took place through an imagined community that might be described as a "virtual cosmopolis." The virtual cosmopolitan in the colonies was able to engage with the printed text emanating from the center and generate new forms of knowledge. These global cultural exchanges were not necessarily dependent upon direct power relations, even

though one cannot deny the uneven relationship of center and periphery.[10] Cosmopolitanism often implies privilege plus freedom of mobility whereas all that the virtual cosmopolitan requires is access to printed material. The concept also gives due recognition to the coexistence and mutual influence of multiple cultures within this informal global network.[11]

I propose "virtual cosmopolitanism" here to argue that the reception of Western ideas in the peripheries, and in colonized countries in particular, was an active process that centered on the agency of the colonized. What struck me most forcefully while working on this paper is that such global exchanges were by no means unidirectional. Westernization of nineteenth- and twentieth-century India is too well ploughed a field for me to rehearse at any length here. Less systematically explored, however, is the impact of ancient Indian thought on American intellectuals. In fact, the dynamics of the circulation of ideas from outside one's own culture and its creative uses were no different among American intellectuals than the Indian intelligentsia. Translations of Asian classics and philosophy, particularly into English and French, and their dissemination resulting from advances in print technology, gave Western intellectuals an entry point into the thoughts of the complex cultures of Asia. Raymond Schwab, who celebrated it as an enriching experience, named it the Oriental Renaissance.[12]

To put it in a nutshell, both Indian and American intellectuals were operating in a virtual space that generated a mode of conversation across cultures, leading to the production of new ideas. What theoretical underpinning can we deploy to make sense of these cultural exchanges that are not prejudged by a dependency syndrome? The Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin coins the term "dialogic" to describe a continuous dialogue with other works of literature. The process appropriates the words of others and transforms them according to one's creative intentions. This intertextual process is dynamic, relational, and engaged in endless redescriptions of one's own world vision. The concept that Bakhtin applies to literary texts could be a useful tool for our cross-cultural analysis of visual art. The particular merit of the dialogic method is that it allows for the coexistence of different approaches in a relativist way; it does not set up an essentialist hierarchy of ideas and values as in the case of colonial discourse, for instance.[13] This accords well with the form of hybrid and multifaceted cosmopolitanism discussed above in the sense that the received foreign text, interpreted in the light of one's own text, sets up a dialogic relationship between the global and the vernacular within a cosmopolitan framework. We automatically imagine the paradigmatic cosmopolitan to be a world tourist or someone who enjoys cosmopolitan values vicariously as a reader of heterogeneous literatures: what they share is an openness to other cultures that they manifest in

their response to plural contexts. Information and communication revolutions enabled intellectuals in the East and the West to discover each other's cultural products, such as art, philosophy, and literature, giving rise to a new global community that was engaged in creating the hybrid multipolar universe of modernity.[14]

With these long introductory remarks, whose objective was to open up the discussion of cultural border crossings on a global level, let me now apply some of these ideas to the mutual reactions of Americans and Indians within the intellectual realm that I have characterized as a virtual cosmopolis. My own work since the 1970s has centered on colonial representations, with particular emphasis on the complex relationship between the British Raj and its Indian subjects. Over the years I have probed the role of British colonial administrator-writers in the construction of the discipline of Indian art history, which shaped Western responses to Indian art even as it provided the wherewithal for the transformation of Indian art in the image of colonial modernity. American and Indian cultural exchanges were in many aspects both similar to and different from the Indo-British colonial relationship. In support of this contention, I will retrace here some well-trodden grounds such as American Transcendentalism and discuss the introduction of the International Style in post-independence India. My aim is not to present a detailed survey of Indian and American encounters but to propose some possible avenues that merit more extensive investigations than are possible in this short essay.

Of course, today the economic and political relationships between America and Asia are growing fast within a new post-colonial world order. In the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth, American engagement with India was indirect and intermittent, as the geographical and cultural distance between the two countries was considerable. Unsurprisingly, however, during the imperial meridian in the nineteenth century, the United States could not be immune to the powerful stereotypes of Indian irrationality created by the authoritative European texts on literature, politics, anthropology, and art. One thus comes across comments by Mark Twain and others that owe a great deal to these texts. The Industrial Revolution, which brought unprecedented material comforts to westerners, became an index of cultural superiority; Europeans and Americans could not help but feel superior to the people outside the West, where material comforts were meager and confined to a small minority.

American reactions to India in this period are particularly complex, however, and cannot be dismissed simply as an endorsement of Victorian representations of Indian society. As a former colony, Americans expressed considerable ambivalence toward the British Empire in the nineteenth century. At the same time they were actively engaged in creating an identity independent of the European continent.

2. *Durgaprasad Ghose*, attributed to Sri Ram Pal, ca. 1837. Clay, straw, pigments, cloth, 46 7/8 in. high. Peabody Essex Museum E9937, Salem, MA, possibly given by Durgaprasad Ghose. Photo © Peabody Essex Museum.

As Susan Bean argues, even though Americans shared the British attitude of moral and racial superiority, as an emancipated colony they saw themselves as different from the British in championing liberty and equality, occasionally sympathizing with the plight of the Indians.[15] From the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century, certain Boston families maintained close trade relations with their Calcutta opposite numbers. The traders T. A. Neil and Raj Kissen Mitter cultivated a warm friendship. They corresponded in English, and Neil stayed as a guest at the Calcutta residence of his Bengali partner in 1809. The Peabody Essex Museum, in Salem, Massachusetts, contains an impressive collection of life-size clay images of the Bengali magnates sent as gifts to their American trade partners (Figure 2). Around the same time, the Philadelphians, as a token of appreciation, presented the Bengali shipping magnate Ramdulal Dey with a portrait of George Washington in the style of Gilbert Stuart, a student of Benjamin West who specialized in portraits of the first president of the United States. The portrait was exhibited at an early art exhibition held in Calcutta in 1874.[16]

Americans, I have suggested, were not unaffected by general Victorian representations of Asia and Africa in the nineteenth century. The celebrated explorer Henry Morton Stanley, who reputedly went in search of Dr. Livingstone, shared, for instance, with the British the prevailing notions of race, hierarchy, and evolution.[17] On the other hand, Mark Twain did not profess much sympathy for colonial empires and their racial ideology and strongly disagreed with Rudyard Kipling's view of Britain's civilizing mission in India. Twain's account of India is sympathetic, humorous, and insightful. Even as he admired India's antiquity, there was a conflict in his mind between India's limitless extravagance and the clarity of Western rationality much in a Hegelian vein: "India has two million gods, and worships them all. In religion all other countries are paupers; India is the only millionaire." He further observed that Indians were "the most interesting people in the world—and

the nearest to being incomprehensible. . . . Their character and their history, their customs and their religion, confront you with riddles at every turn—riddles which are a trifle more perplexing after they are explained than they were before."[18]

America's intense intellectual engagement with India may appear as the revenge of the meek and the fallen during the period of European ascendancy. The phenomenon is, however, more complicated, involving various factors, not least the desire on the part of American intellectuals to free themselves from the limitations of European positivist thought. Here we may pose once again the question I asked at the outset: why does a society or culture become more receptive to ideas from outside, and what does it take from another society that is in consonance with its own values and cultural imperatives? In studies of Westernization in Asia and Africa, it is now common to hold that the acculturation process was not a passive act but a highly selective affair. This principle may also enable us to understand the revolutionary impact of Eastern philosophy on the West. For this application to work, however, we need to view the reception of Indian philosophy among Americans as not totally different from the influence of the Enlightenment on nineteenth-century Indians; they are two sides to the same coin of reception studies.

The wide intellectual interest in Indian philosophy reflected a powerful paradigm shift in the West that led painters Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian and philosophers Arthur Schopenhauer and Martin Heidegger, for instance, to turn to the East and seek an active dialogue with the thinkers of the Asian continent. It is a striking fact that if the dark reverse side of colonialism was its racism and ideology of difference, its obverse was an active engagement by Europeans with the wealth of Eastern, particularly Indian thought. Why was this so? As Paul Carus, scholar of religion and friend of the American Transcendentalists, put it, "Mankind does not want Buddhism, nor Islam, nor Christianity; mankind wants the truth, and truth is best brought out by a impartial comparison."[19] This search for a wider spiritual meaning in life intensified in the wake of widespread disillusionment with Enlightenment rationality and industrial materialism of the Victorian age, perhaps nowhere more intense than in America. The key year was 1893. The charismatic Hindu monk Swami Vivekananda won rapturous ovation with his "ecumenical" speech addressing his audience as "sisters and brothers of America" at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago.[20]

Vivekananda's tumultuous reception was only the culmination of a longer process that had begun in the late eighteenth century with European discovery of Sanskrit literature that inspired the "Oriental Renaissance." The key texts were Charles Wilkins's translation of the Bhagavad Gita, H. T. Colebrooke's edition of the Rig-Veda, and the Bengali savant Rammohun Roy's translation of the Upanishads. The sublime poetry

of the Bhagavad Gita continued to inspire as late as 1945. Stunned by the awesome power of the atom bomb detonated at Los Alamos, Robert Oppenheimer was moved to quote the epiphany of the god Krishna in the Hindu text: "If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendor of the mighty one," and "I am become death; the destroyer of worlds."[21]

To return to Mark Twain, the novelist's long meditation on India is at one with the sentiment of the German Romantics: "India had the start of the whole world in the beginning of things. She had the first civilization; she had the first accumulation of material wealth; she was populous with deep thinkers and subtle intellects; she had mines, and woods, and a fruitful soil. It would seem as if she should have kept the lead, and should be to-day not the meek dependent of an alien master, but mistress of the world, and delivering law and command to every tribe and nation in it."[22]

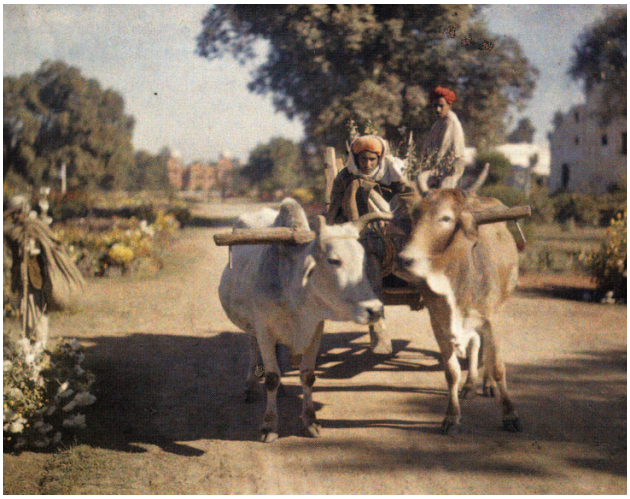
Transcendentalism, most closely associated in the popular imagination with Ralph Waldo Emerson, was one of the most original movements to grow up on the American soil. Despite its indebtedness to the venerable history of European thought, it was determined to assert its originality. Drawing upon the discoveries of Sanskrit texts by Sir William Jones and other Orientalists, the Transcendentalists set in motion a remarkable conversation with Indian philosophy, which enabled them to examine their own faith more critically, each of the intellectual figures associated with Indian thought providing their own interpretations on the subject. One common characteristic of Buddhism, Hinduism, and other ancient Indian religions is their questioning of articles of faith—an approach that dovetailed perfectly with the Transcendentalist search for wider spiritual values and a more critical stance toward to mainstream Christianity. As early as 1818, Emerson had turned to Hindu thought after his aunt introduced him to Rammohun Roy's editions of the ancient Indian metaphysical texts, the Upanishads. This great nineteenth-century intellectual was an inspiration to the Spanish liberals who dedicated the 1812 Constitution to him. Emerson's interest was to flower into what Walt Whitman called New World Metaphysics, which liberated the Transcendentalists from Christianity. As R. C. Gordon shows, reunion of the soul with Brahman or the Spirit became preferable to the Christian notion of salvation. Yet Emerson did initially approach Hinduism in an uncritical frame of mind, as suggested by his prize poem at Harvard entitled, "Indian Superstition."[23]

Henry David Thoreau's classic text *Walden* speaks of "the pure Walden water . . . mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges."[24] Thoreau's interest was more in terms of a temperamental affinity with Indian thought, especially its stress on meditation and asceticism. He admired the mystical poem Bhagavad Gita, and he bequeathed 40 volumes of Indian texts to Emerson. Walt Whitman too had amassed ancient Indian material throughout his life, which informed the spirit of his poetry

and explained his engagement with Indian philosophy. The striking line in "Song of Myself" (Canto 51), namely, "I am large, I contain multitudes," directly paraphrases the Gita. In his masterpiece, *Leaves of Grass*, the great poet undertakes his own "Passage to India." His ultimate journey on his deathbed sings praises of modern progress while reminding us of the importance of ancient wisdom, expressing the hope that technology will help bring East and West together. Hence his "Passage" becomes more a metaphor for a spiritual journey than a literal trip to India itself.[25] The novelist Herman Melville and the psychologist William James belonged to the same intellectual circle. May I remind you of Melville's comparison of Moby Dick with Vishnu's Matsya Incarnation?[26] Less sympathetic though no less knowledgeable, James's empiricist bent of mind displayed some ambivalence toward Buddhism and Hinduism. He nonetheless felt the need to recognize other great world systems. On a lower intellectual plane, one may mention Henry Olcott, the co-founder with Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky of the Theosophical Society, which drew inspiration from ancient Indian wisdom.[27] One may describe the response to the Bhagavad Gita and other ancient Indian metaphysical works as an informed but critical one that enabled Emerson, Whitman, and Oppenheimer to engage with the texts of other cultures in a dialogic way, not simply reproducing the tenets of the Bhagavad Gita, for instance, but generating new thoughts in consonance with Western modernity.

3. Poster for *Gunga Din* (RKO Pictures, 1939). From Stephen Rebello and Richard Allen, *Reel Art: Great Posters from the Golden Age of the Silver Screen* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), 155.

On a popular level, the lure of India left its mark on American consciousness in a number of different ways that one is only able to touch upon here. One of the offshoots of the growing awareness of ancient Indian texts was the dedication of a mesa in the Grand Canyon to the Hindu god Shiva. India's alien exoticism offered Hollywood visually enthralling material (Figure 3); the studios in their turn exported this fascination worldwide, not excluding India. The Hollywood Moguls, whose extravagant



4. Albert Kahn, *Kapurthala, India*, 1927. From David Okuefuna, *The Wonderful World of Albert Kahn: Colour Photographs from a Lost Age* (London: BBC, 2008), 223.

lifestyle was compared to that of the Grand Mughals of medieval India, created an enduring image of the romantic Orient with their elaborate sets of lush oriental interiors, florid temples, lurid customs, and thronging multitudes of humanity.

Cinema that uses Indian locale to evoke a frisson of otherness continues to be a staple of Hollywood cinema. It exploits an escapist genre that is perennially popular, to judge by Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*. The myth of empire, white superiority, and British civilizing mission—all these resonated with Hollywood, as a spate of films dealing with the British Raj in India bears witness. *The Green Goddess* by the English playwright William Archer was turned into a silent adventure film in 1923, to be remade as a talkie in 1930. Typical ingredients of these adventure films were the stiff upper lip, gallantry, and rationality of the English gentlemen heroes, in contrast to the sadism and vindictiveness of oriental potentates who worshipped bloodthirsty deities like the eponymous goddess in the film. Other movies romancing the British Empire—the *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935), *Gunga Din* (1939), and *Sundown* (1941)—were inspired by Kipling or, in the case of *Clive of India* (1935), by the imperial adventurer Robert Clive, founder of the British Empire.[28] At the same time, the cinema has the power to instruct and transmit knowledge in the form of documentary films. The foremost American industrial architect Albert Kahn's mammoth photographic project on global diversity includes the earliest color photographs of the holy city of Benares, and Indianstyle villages as a key example of rural civilization (Figure 4). The foremost quality of Kahn's faithful documentation is that he does not fall for cheap exoticism even as he treats picturesque subjects, such as Benares or the Hindu yogis.

On the heels of this brief consideration of the American discovery of India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I would like to conclude with an examination of the slow encroachment of America in Indian consciousness in a period before more complex Indian responses were set against the background of Cold War politics on the one hand and the global desire to obtain a slice of the American Dream. As Hollywood drew upon

the Indian imaginary, the universal language of American films, epitomized by Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, and Mary Pickford provided the material for collective fantasy in India. From the early twentieth century, Americans writers began to feature more prominently in Indian thought as well. Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement clearly acknowledged its debt to Thoreau's doctrine of civil disobedience. In the 1950s, Martin Luther King's civil disobedience movement returned the compliment by seeking inspiration in the Mahatma.

Following decolonization, relations between India and America entered a new chapter as the Third World, especially non-aligned India under its first Prime Minster, Jawaharlal Nehru, began playing a more active role in international politics. Indian music, interpreted for the Western audience by the sitar maestro Ravi Shankar, revealed an entirely new world to the Americans, offering fresh creative possibilities to Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and other Minimalists.

With Nehru assuming the mantle of leadership after independence, India embarked on the systematic creation of a modern secular state, symbolized by his vision of town planning that drew upon the experience of continental and American avant-garde masters of design and architecture. Nehru's appreciation of the pioneers of modernist design brought to an end the long colonial chapter in Indian history dominated by British art and architecture. Charles and Ray Eames, celebrated for their radical industrial designs and contribution to the intelligence and communication revolution, were invited in 1958 to advise on the future of small industries faced with rapid industrialization. Their report, produced after investigating rural handicrafts and modern design centers throughout the subcontinent, led to the establishment of the influential National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad. The Eames report is infused with ideas of Indian spirituality. The long quotation from the Bhagavad Gita in its preface makes a gesture that takes us back once again to the American discovery of Indian scriptures in the nineteenth century. The Eames husband-and-wife team pay a heartfelt compliment to Indian society. In the face of change, they write, India enjoys a great advantage: she has a tradition and a philosophy familiar with the meaning of creative destruction, which is an advantage in restructuring society. The report's main tenor was to reiterate the values and qualities that Indians held important for a good life.[29]

Perhaps in no other sphere does one detect a more intense and dialogic Indo-U.S. relationship than in the evolution of modernist architecture in post-colonial India (Figure 5). One witnesses there a complex and symbiotic relationship growing up between Indian architects and the American masters of the International Style, which may be described as one of mutual creative exchanges. The United States was one of the key centers of architectural modernism in the twentieth century, but

5. Joseph Allen Stein, India International Centre, New Delhi, India. Photo by Partha Mitter.

apart from that American architecture proved to be an especially attractive counterweight to British colonial buildings in a newly independent India. The American architects and designers also readily expressed deep affinities with Indian spirituality. This was part of a larger phenomenon that drew intellectually adventurous architects to India because of unlimited possibilities, compared by Joseph Allen Stein to the United States of the Jeffersonian era.

Even though Frank Lloyd Wright was never personally involved in building in the subcontinent, and the Swiss-French master Le Corbusier was invited by Nehru to design the new capital of the Punjab and Haryana at Chandigarh, the spirit of Wright's architecture permeated post-colonial India. The earliest traces of Louis Sullivan, Wright, and the Prairie School are to be found in India long before independence in the buildings of Walter Burley Griffin and Antonin Raymond, both of whom had been pupils of Wright. Griffin, who was in India in 1935–37, built extensively in the Muslim city of Lucknow and its environs, drawing inspiration from Indian architecture. Raymond was briefly in India in 1937 in connection with building projects at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry, which was then a French colony. It was during that time that Raymond engaged George Nakashima to design organic furniture, named by him Golconde design after the medieval Indian kingdom. These were indeed pioneering figures who introduced modernist design and architecture to India.

Following the departure of the British in 1947, the pace quickened. Gautam Sarabhai, a member of a leading industrialist family, introduced many of Wright's ideas in Gujarat. Among post-independence architects, Charles Correa trained at MIT, A. P. Kanvinde received his degree at Harvard, and Balkrishna Doshi won a fellowship at the University of Chicago. In that city, Doshi met Louis Kahn, a major figure who was sympathetic to eastern spirituality, using the concept of light as a metaphysical substance in his building designs. At Doshi's behest, he spent over a decade in Ahmedabad, conducting influential seminars and designing the Indian Institute of Management building in the city. His most important work, however, was the National Assembly Building in Dhaka, the capital of East Pakistan, considered

a masterpiece of International Modernism (Figure 1). Finally, the man who disseminated Wright's ideas most successfully in India was Joseph Allen Stein, who founded the partnership of Stein, Doshi, and Bhalla in order to disseminate organic architecture. Arguably, Stein's finest achievement was the elegant International Centre in New Delhi (Figure 5), set in a Mughal garden, which sensitively blended his environmental ideals, spirituality, and ethnocentric regionalism. Stein was both perceptive and fortunate in being able to situate the Centre in close proximity to the old Mughal Lodi gardens in a playful juxtaposition of the old and the new.

As these important exponents of modernism were emulated by the rising generation of Indian architects, the American architects themselves aimed at combining formalism with an informed sympathy for ancient Indian thought. It has been said that India profoundly transformed these practitioners of the International Style. There is no more eloquent testimony to this than this passage from an interview given by Stein: "Why do I continue to live and work in India? I think India offers the great possibility of beauty with simplicity. This is a rare and little understood thing in the world today; yet one sees it here in so many different ways."[30]

There are clearly many more avenues of cultural interchange between India and the United States to explore. What I have tried to do here is to raise questions about a set of fruitful exchanges between these two nations over the last 200 years within the context of some possible conceptual frameworks for studying the West's interaction with Asian cultures. When there is an intellectual engagement with the thoughts of other societies, as was the case with India and America, that encounter becomes an instrument for scrutinizing one's own culture more critically. The diverse personalities studied here express the catholicity of minds capable of embracing the new and seeing the interlinks of global culture, as epitomized by Joseph Allen Stein's "expanding vision of interconnected global relations."[31]

Notes

1. Intercultural exchange is a fast growing but as yet nebulous area. My thanks to the Smithsonian Institution for inviting me to take part in what turned out to be an unusually rewarding symposium. Strikingly I have been invited to several recent conferences dealing with the problem of cultural transfers or migration of ideas and technologies, as for instance, meetings in Berlin on the global Bauhaus, in Heidelberg on *Punch* magazine as a transcultural phenomenon, and in St. Petersburg in Russia on "the global Cézanne effect." I have also been having fruitful conversations with a group of younger scholars, notably Kris Manjapra, who is developing the idea of "crossing borders."

2. Partha Mitter, "Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," *Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (December 2008): 531–74.

3. John James Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 1997), 5.

4. See Partha Mitter, "The Hottentot Venus and Western Man: Reflections on the Construction of Beauty in the West" (London: Routledge, 2000), 40–41, and Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (1977; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) for a discussion of art history and western representations of ancient Indian art.

5. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), 3.

6. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6, 7. doi:10.4324/9780203163672.

7. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Norton, 2006), xv.

8. Craig Calhoun, "'Belonging' in the Cosmopolitan Imaginary," *Ethnicities* (Debate) 3, no. 4 (New Delhi: Sage, 2003): 531–68, doi:10.1177/1468796803003004005. James Clifford speaks of "discrepant cosmopolitanism" to explain globalization from below of the powerless and the disadvantaged; see "Mixed Feelings," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation,* ed. Pheang Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 362–65. On hybridity, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) excerpted in C. Harrison and P. Wood, *Art in Theory 1900–2000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 1,112.

9. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

10. See Partha Mitter, *Triumph of Modernism: Indian Artists and the Avant-Garde* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007). On center and periphery as a political concept rather than a geographical one, see Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginsberg, "Centro e periferia," in *Storia dell' arte italiana*, I/1 *Materiali e problemi*. *Questioni e metodi,* a cura di G. Prevital (Turin: Einaudi, 1979): 285–354.

11. See Sheldon Pollock, Homi Bhabha, Carol Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabharty, "Cosmopolitanisms," *Public Culture*, 12, no. 3 (2000), 577–90. doi:10.1215/08992363-12-3-577.

12. Raymond Schwab, *La Renaissance orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1950).

13. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) and Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London: Routledge, 2002).

14. I have used Calhoun's ideas of the global community as not inimical to cosmopolitanism. While it is true that ethnic conflicts have emanated from narrow communal allegiances, the notion of community itself need not be confined to single ethnic allegiances. Calhoun writes that "public communication is itself a form of solidarity." Those who are inspired by Eastern ideas are not anti-modern but critical of modernity as in the case of Kandinsky; see Mitter, *Triumph of Modernism*, 34, 35, 117–18.

15. Susan Bean, *Yankee India: American Commercial and Cultural Encounters with India in the Age of Sail 1784–1860* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2001), 22.

16. Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1994), 75. The portrait of Washington has since been attributed to William Winstanley, who copied a number of Stuart paintings; it is in the collection of Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA; see Bean, *Yankee India*, 72, no. 30, 75.

17. Brian V. Street, *The Savage in Literature: Representations of 'Primitive' Society in English Fiction 1858–1920* (London: Routledge, 1975); and Victor G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind* (London: The Cresset Library, 1969), 226.

18. Mark Twain, *Following the Equator, and Anti-Imperialist Essays: Mark Twain*, preface Shelley Fisher Fishkin (New York, 1996), 397, 451–52. On Hegel's description of Indian religion, see Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 208–20.

19. Quoted in Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment*, 84.

20. M. L. Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, Part 1 (Delhi, 1983) 81.

21. Robert Oppenheimer quotes from the *Bhagavad Gita* in the television documentary *The Decision to Drop the Bomb,* produced by Fred Freed and broadcast on NBC in 1965; see James A Hijiya, "The *Gita* of J. Robert Oppenheimer," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 144, no. 2 (June 2000): 123.

22. Mark Twain, *Following the Equator*, 398. On German Romanticism and Indian thought, see Schwab, *Renaissance orientale*.

23. See Partha Mitter, "Rammohun Roy et le nouveau langage du monothéisme," in *L'Impensable polythéisme*, ed. Francis Schmidt (Montreux: Éditions des archives contemporaines, Gordon & Breach Science Publishers, 1988), 258. See Robert C. Gordon, "Emerson's Earliest Interest in India," www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i_es/i_es_gordo_emerson.htm.

24. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings* (New York: Bantam, 1962), 339.

25. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, eds. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York University Press, 1965) 88, 420. The complete version of *Leaves of Grass* was published in 1881.

26. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, eds. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker (New York: Norton, 1967), 225. Mention of Vishnu occurs in chapter 55, where Melville discusses the description of the whale in different religions and cultures.

27. On the apparent correspondence between James's psychology and Buddhist psychology in his proposal for a scientific study of religion, see Miranda Shaw, "William James and Yogacara Philosophy: A Comparative Enquiry," *Philosophy East and West* 37, no. 3 (July 1987): 223–44, doi:10.2307/1398517. On the Theosophists, see Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived, a History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

28. Jeffrey Richards, "Films and the Empire: Britain in the 1930s," in *Literature and Imperialism*, ed. Bart Moore-Gilbert (London: Roehampton Institute of Higher Education, 1983), 160–61.

29. Charles Eames and Ray Eames, *The Eames Report* (Ahmedabad:, National Institute of Design, 1958).

30. Stephen White, *Building in the Garden: the Architecture of Joseph Allen Stein* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1993), 35.

31. Ibid.

Destructive Creation

The U.S.–Philippine Relationship in American Art

J. M. Mancini

Forged in war and framed by empire, the relationship between the United States and the Philippines has been as tumultuous as any of America's encounters with other Asian nations. And yet, as recent analysts have emphasized, one of the most marked aspects of that long-running connection is the extent to which it has become hidden from the U.S. historical imagination through neglect, willful forgetting, and "miseducation." The result has been the shrouding of the U.S.–Philippine relationship—and its violent foundation in the Philippine-American War—in what the poet and critic Luis H. Francia has called a "mantle of invisibility." "Here is a war that lasted for a decade, cost so much more money and lives than the 1898 Spanish-American War," Francia writes, "reduced in scale and intensity to a nonevent."[1]

Francia's critique also carries profound weight for the American art-historical imagination. To be fair, a small number of scholars have noted that the creation of works of art and architecture played a part in the U.S. imperial administration of the Philippines. Most recently, David Brody explored how the colonization of the Philippines "permitted the acting out of American Orientalist fantasies" that had permeated U.S. visual and material culture in the late nineteenth century. And, as early as 1972 Thomas S. Hines noted that "[Daniel] Burnham's mission to the Philippines as an architectural consultant in 1904 and 1905 and his subsequent planning proposals for the cities of Manila and Baguio constituted indeed an architectural corollary to the earlier more salient programs of the United States for the islands' political and economic development." But in American art scholarship at large there has been little exploration of the extent to which the turn-of-the-century Americans who forged empire shared the era's

particularly intense attraction to art-making as a vehicle and venue for political, social, cultural, and economic transformation. This is surprising, for two reasons. The first is that architecture was only one of the wide range of aesthetic media in which Americans worked in this context, from photographs, picture postcards, and illustrated books, to buildings and landscapes. The second is that evidence for this ferment is not only to be found in the Philippines; a significant quantity of relevant material is also available in the United States, hidden in plain sight in repositories including the Smithsonian Institution.[2]

With this in mind, the first aim of this essay is to remove Hines's qualification that "political and economic" programs pursued by the United States in the Philippines were "more salient" than merely "corollary" art and architectural measures. In fact, the U.S. political and economic programs that the historian Glenn May has insightfully called an "experiment in self-duplication" nearly always contained within them a constitutive element of aesthetic transformation that directly intersected with more familiar practices of "social engineering." U.S. attempts to create and reformulate Philippine civic institutions along American lines entailed not only the reconfiguration of abstract principles and relations between people but also the physical and aesthetic reconstruction of "the political landscape" in the sense that the term is employed by the archaeologist Adam T. Smith—as a built environment comprising buildings, monuments, architectural decoration, and other works of visual art, which in turn became the physical context for the performance of aesthetically charged civic rituals and the subject of further representation.[3]

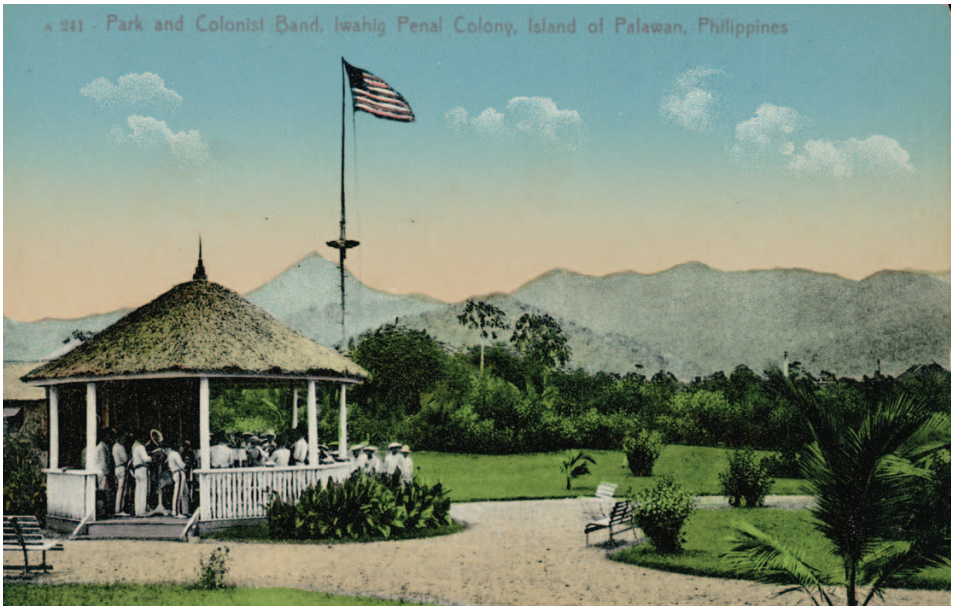
The American reconstruction of the Philippine political landscape was, as this suggests, a complex and multifaceted process. On the most basic level, it involved the deployment—in the design and construction of U.S.-controlled institutions in the Philippines such as schools, hospitals, and prisons—of forms and styles that directly referenced the American metropole. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of large new neoclassical buildings such as the Manila building that was recently refurbished as the National Art Gallery. The structure was designed originally as the city's public library by the American architect Ralph Harrington Doane and built, according to revised plans designed by the Filipino architect Juan Arellano, as the Legislative Building in 1926. Beyond "self-duplication," however, the U.S. employment of neoclassicism also referenced the more general process of architectural reiteration that attended the imperial building projects of Britain and other European empires—including Spain, which in the Philippines employed neoclassicism in both civil and ecclesiastical buildings such as the monumental Taal church in Batangas Province.[4]

In other instances, American structures referred to regional, vernacular, and domestic forms that were adapted to use in the Philippines. This is not to say

that such quotidian forms did not also have imperial associations. For instance, an American hospital built in the form of a bungalow referred both to U.S. domestic architecture (and perhaps especially to the domestic architecture of California, the home state of many Americans in the Philippines and the point of embarkation for the vast majority of U.S. soldiers and civilians alike) and to colonial Anglo-Indian architecture. What is striking in this case of an institution built in a vernacular, regional mode is that it was (like grander structures in more imposing styles) also understood by some American observers as a "monument" whose success as a work of institutional architecture correlated specifically to the success of American geopolitical aims. This is made clear by a typed annotation affixed to a photograph of the building found in an album made by the American teachers Maud and Luther Parker. It describes the hospital as "entirely free from the usual odors of such institutions" and the "main operating room" as "made of crystal," and declares, "All of this is the great Monument of the American flag in the Philippine Islands."[5]

Another quotidian form derived from an Asian original that Americans built into the Philippine landscape—and then represented in other media—was the gazebo. As is suggested by the thirteenth-century Southern Song dynasty painting collected by Charles Lang Freer, *Strolling to a Lakeside Gazebo*, gazebos historically were associated with elite social rituals. Wealthy Americans constructed them for private use in the nineteenth century, as may be seen in Thomas Hill's painting *Irrigating at Strawberry Farm* (ca. 1865), depicting a California landowner with Chinese laborers before a gazebo and a distant Mission-revival mansion. But generally speaking it may be said that in the context of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century United States the gazebo acquired quite a different set of associations. Particularly when configured as a bandstand, the American gazebo came to be situated precisely at the confluence of landscape architecture and civic ritual and thus was perhaps quintessentially associated with the performance of Americanness. As such, gazebos were built not only on public greens but in institutions with an avowedly assimilationist purpose, such as Pennsylvania's Carlisle Indian School.[6]

In the Philippines, Americans created, preserved, and reiterated gazebo landscapes, both in symbolically important locations such as the large Manila park known as the Luneta and within new landscapes, including those specifically associated with American institutions. Both the Luneta and an open-air pavilion there preceded U.S. occupation. Nonetheless, from the beginning Americans worked to claim the site through use, alteration, and representation. During the Philippine-American War, the U.S. military used the park as an encampment ground for troops and for the procession of fallen officers, as well as the grounds for Fourth of July rituals and the performance of celebrations for other newly introduced holidays.



1. Lambert-Springer Co., *Park and Colonist Band, Iwahig Penal Colony, Island of Palawan, Philippines*, ca. 1909–20. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

These and other uses were then photographed and sent back to the United States as commercial images. U.S. alterations included the extension of the park and creation of a "New Luneta," on a large site reclaimed from the sea, on which a large flagpole was raised and two gazebos symmetrically placed on either side of the flagpole. This transformed landscape was the subject of American images intended for circulation to the United States and/or among Americans in the Philippines. One example, a postcard published by the Philippine Curio Agency, cast the gazebo-laden bayside stretch of the Luneta as a place where Americans could indulge in nostalgic yearning. As the poem printed below the image lugubriously intoned, "The slow undulating blue waters/Bejeweled with sparkling white foam/Lazily waver in front of my vision,—Lazily whisper a message of home!"[7]

Americans also produced and reproduced gazebo landscapes mirroring the United States in explicitly institutional contexts. One striking example of this is a postcard by the prolific Manila-based American publishers Leon J. Lambert and Milton Springer, depicting a white-clad band in and around a gazebo (Figure 1). Nearly every detail of this landscape—the waving American flag, the manicured grass, the immaculate pathways, the slatted benches—evokes the United States. In some cases, these details evoke the landscape of California, notably the lush, yet controlled plantings of palms, the imposing mountains, and the pink-to-blue sky. Indeed, while there is no direct evidence that the landscape in the postcard was designed after a particular U.S. original, it is striking that the somewhat idiosyncratic palm-thatch roof of the gazebo, the Pacific vegetation, and the mountains do have counterparts in a specific

U.S. landscape that was reproduced tens of thousands of times in the same period. This was the gazebo'd park on Redlands, California's Smiley Drive, drawn by Louise M. Keeler and printed in *Southern California*, a guidebook published by the Santa Fe railroad that was in its eightieth edition in 1901.[8]

While Lambert and Springer's image might be taken at first glance for a picture of preparations for a Fourth of July celebration in California, the caption indicates that this was not at all what the postcard represented. In fact, the figures in the bandstand were colonists in the Iwahig Penal Colony on Palawan Island—a U.S. facility built in 1904 in the face of overcrowding and rioting in Manila's Bilibid Prison. As such, the image might be taken at second glance as merely an example—admittedly, a somewhat bizarre example—of U.S. social engineering through the apparently benevolent use of pleasing landscape architecture and uplifting civic ritual. But, as Michael Salman argues, the colony did not just hold criminals in need of reform. Rather by 1908 as many as a third of Iwahig's inmates were political prisoners, incarcerated for crimes such as sedition, insurrection, or "brigandage." This latter offense, as Jim Zwick argues, was introduced by the Philippine Commission in 1902 precisely to criminalize armed resistance to U.S. rule—just as the United States had earlier defined the conflict itself as an "insurrection" rather than a war. In other words, the "Brigandage Act" or "Bandolerismo Statute" that brought many Filipinos to Iwahig represented the continuation of a deliberate U.S. effort to limit its obligations towards Filipino revolutionaries, who would have enjoyed specific rights and privileges under U.S. and international law if they had been defined as legitimate combatants and as prisoners of war. As such, the image is something of a sorcerer's mirror, reflecting the U.S. promulgation of the "soft power" of social engineering through aesthetic reform, while occluding its exercise of harder forms of coercion rooted in war.[9]

Lambert and Springer's *Park and Colonist Band, Iwahig Penal Colony, Island of Palawan, Philippines* thus brings us back to Francia's assertion that the Philippine-American War lurks in the blindest spot of the U.S.–Philippine relationship—and to some of the ways in which the American art-historical imagination has been blinded to coercion and violence as contexts for aesthetic practice within that relationship. For, if it may be argued that American art scholarship generally ignores images, objects, buildings, and landscapes produced within the context of the U.S.–Philippine encounter, then it may also be argued that even the limited body of scholarship that does address the role of American art and architecture in that context tends to bracket this aspect of the subject. Hines's account, for example, focuses entirely on Burnham's plan and the "architecture of quality and of startlingly prophetic import" of William E. Parsons, the consulting architect appointed to carry out the plan, essentially skipping over the war and its legacies. And, while Brody does interleave an analysis of Burnham and

Parsons with material from the Spanish-American War—notably in an interesting account of how a "naval [and] land parade, fireworks, street decorations, swarms of visitors, the construction of the monumental *Dewey Arch*, and a range of other cultural productions" contributed to the "canonization" of Admiral George Dewey in the United States—his account is less attentive to the specific ways in which aesthetic, military, and political practices intersected in the (deadlier, costlier, larger-scale, and more intense) Philippine-American War. Moreover, in their accounts both authors emphasize positive aesthetic practices such as creation, reproduction, circulation, and the preservation by Burnham and Parsons of "pre-existing Spanish design."[10]

While once again acknowledging its debts to these earlier authors, this essay proposes, as a second line of argument, that a greater emphasis should be placed upon aesthetic practices that had dislocating, disfiguring, or destructive results. Such a reorientation, I argue elsewhere, must include an analysis of how the American spoliation and destruction of art and architecture directly intersected with military practice during the officially recognized period of conflict between 1899 and 1902. But it also ought to entail a recognition of the subtler ways in which a dynamic interplay between creation and destruction persisted much later—throughout the decade of simultaneous conflict and reconstruction that followed Theodore Roosevelt's official declaration of the end of the war in 1902, and even into the somewhat less tumultuous decades that followed.[11]

One place to begin such a reorientation is with the Burnham plan itself, and Parsons's work to implement it through the design and construction of certain structures. Here the emphasis placed by scholars on the preservation of the Spanish imperial past is appropriate. But so too are contrary aspects, beginning with the American reconfiguration of Manila. Since the sixteenth century, the walled city of Intramuros had been the center of political, economic, military, and religious authority. It was Manila's and the Philippines' central "political landscape," embodied by structures such as the Ayuntamiento, the seat of the city government; the Aduana, or customs house; Fort Santiago; and the churches and houses of the Catholic religious orders—and by spaces such as the Plaza Aduana (renamed the Plaza de los Martires de la Integridad de la Patria in 1897 to honor loyalist troops in the Philippine Revolution). The Burnham plan did "preserve" this landscape's "picturesque" structures and spaces. It did so, however, by converting the walled city into "a recreation park possessing expansive promenades where the people gather during open air band concerts" (indeed, "one corner of the bastille has been made over into an underground aquarium") while relocating the new core of buildings, spaces, and avenues in extramural districts.[12] Thus, while not destroying the individual buildings of Intramuros (as would happen on an almost incalculable scale during the Second

2. Adam Clark Vroman, *No. 3. Mission San Luis Rey de Francia. Founded 1798. General View from S-E.* National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

World War), Burnham's plan effected a symbolic reduction of the landscape as a whole, akin to desacralization or deconsecration.

Individual buildings also embodied the dynamic interplay between creative and destructive practices. Hines convincingly presents Parsons's method as a distillation from "the corpus of Spanish-Philippine building," analogous and parallel to "Irving Gill and his California contemporaries[']increasingly purified abstractions of the earlier Spanish Colonial styles." In both cases ecclesiastical architecture was a primary referent, seen for example in the overlapping employment by Gill, in the 1913 Women's Club of La Jolla, and by Parsons, in the 1910 Philippine General Hospital, of arcades of round arches, a staple feature of both the California missions and Spanish churches in the Philippines. Such arches can be seen in Adam Clark Vroman's late-nineteenth-century postcard of Mission San Luis Rey de Francia (Figure 2) in California. Indeed, while Parsons himself was not apparently directly influenced by the California missions, other Americans engaged in the reconstruction of Philippine institutions certainly imagined a link between them and the Philippine landscape. Maud and Luther Parker (who became industrial inspector in the Bureau of Education), for example, affixed 18 postcards of the California missions into their album, along with the many architectural and ethnographic views of the Philippines that constituted the bulk of its images.[13]

Gill's distillation of architectural elements from California's picturesquely ruined missions into modernist clubs and laboratories did parallel aesthetic processes that took place in the Philippines to some degree. There was a key difference, however. In California, by the time of Gill, Vroman, and even the U.S.-Mexican War, the missions

3. Strohmeyer & Wyman, Publishers/Underwood & Underwood, *Ruins of the old Church at Guadalupe—burned during Filipino retreat—Philippines*, 1899. Stereograph. Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Prints and Photographs Division.

were already secularized, in poor repair, and anachronistic. When the United States went to war with the Philippines, in contrast, the church landscape there was still very much in use. Thus it could not just be reimagined by the makers of nostalgic postcards or the cool renderers of architectural parts, but had to be wrested from the control of the Catholic church and the religious orders through legal wrangling, negotiated or coerced occupation, or force. These processes were inscribed upon the buildings themselves and upon American representations of them—and, it is arguable that they were embedded within the new structures Americans built. Consider, for example, the inclusion in the Parker album of a commercial photograph of the Jesuit Observatory. This was no mere recording of a tourist visit, for the 1901 annotations to the image mark out the "Exposition Building where we are stationed," the "Baggage room, Assembly Hall, Observatory, Ladies' Quarters, and Carriage Rooms"—in other words, the appropriation of the complex for U.S. civilian occupation. Or consider the Augustinian church and convent at Guadalupe (Figure 3), outside Manila, whose iconic tiered arcades and popularity as an American tourist site—one 1906 guide called it "Guadalupe Queen of the Ruins"—made it a likely model for Parsons's cloister-like arrangement of tiered arches in the Philippine General Hospital (Figure 4). Along with several other church buildings in the province of Manila, Guadalupe was a ruin, not because of the ravages of time or earthquakes, but because it had been burned by U.S. forces in 1899.[14]

An undercurrent of destruction also informed U.S. revisions to another, final institution: schools. Here it is necessary to comment briefly on the importance of schools as a site for U.S. social engineering in the Philippines, and on the intersection between so-called social engineering and aesthetic transformation in that context. Like the revolutionary Filipino government, whose 1899 constitution called for a separation

of church and state and the establishment of "free and obligatory" public education, the American administration originally set out to secularize the schools and to extend their reach to wider segments of the population—although the goal of universal primary education was quickly abandoned. Within this framework, U.S. administrators and educators pursued a range of other political, social, economic, and cultural goals, through instruments as varied as the use of English as the medium of instruction, the introduction of physical education and other curricular changes, and the institutionalization in the school calendar of new holidays including not only Independence Day (which fell during the Philippine school year) but also Thanksgiving Day, Washington's Birthday, and even Occupation Day.[15]

CORRIDOR.

COURT AND CORRIDORS.

PLATE XIX.

4. *History and Description of the Philippine General Hospital*, compiled by John E. Snodgrass (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1912), pl. XIX. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Even more than in other institutions, social engineering in the U.S.-administered Philippine schools intersected with reformist aesthetic practices. Perhaps the most obvious of these was the Bureau of Education's wholesale redesign and reconstruction of the educational infrastructure—including in some cases the construction of dormitories as well as schools. This was a highly centralized project, exemplified by the adoption under Parsons in 1912 of a Philippine-wide "unit system of construction" for the building of schools of all sizes. Thus even before Filipino school children experienced a single day of the American curriculum, or heard an American teacher speak a word of English, schools built in this architectural mode themselves imparted some first modernist lessons in modular design, scale efficiency, and centralized administration.[16]

The institutionalization of new holidays in Philippine school calendars also employed aesthetic practices in the service of ideological change. American holidays provided obvious occasions for "Our young Filipinos" to perform American civil religion, to exhibit the U.S. flag, and to become the subject of images to be circulated in the

5. B. W. Kilburn, *Our young Filipinos in holiday attire at the Fourth of July celebration, Manila, P. I.*, 1900. Stereograph. Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Prints and Photographs Division.

United States (Figure 5). Holidays also provided the opportunity for additional ways of enlisting Filipino youth in the reiteration of American iconography. School drawing manuals developed by Americans for use in the Philippines recommended holidays including Flag Day, Independence Day, and Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays as suitable occasions for the assignment of "special projects" to be undertaken by students.[17]

And then there is art and craft education itself. As they developed new schools, U.S. educators developed a complex system of art and craft education that turned Philippine schoolchildren into producers of highly specific kinds of works such as hats, mats, and works of embroidery. In turn, art and craft education became the subject of further representations in such images as the colorful Lambert-Springer Co. postcard *Embroidery Class, Manila, Philippines* (ca. 1909–20)—also reproduced in black and white in the Bureau of Education's *Bulletin No. 34, Lace Making and Embroidery*.[18]

Such instruction bore some similarity to industrial design education in the United States, which matched economic to human development. But in this case, as in others, it may be seen that reforms in the Philippines were not just examples of a generalized reform program "appropriate for cities everywhere," but that they entailed degrees of control and coercion that distinguished them from many domestic counterparts. The U.S. Department of Public Instruction micromanaged aesthetic details as minute as the color schemes employed in the making of mats, whose brilliant colors American educators worked to "tone down." This aversion to brilliant color undoubtedly owed its origin in part to prevailing American models of color theory, notably A. H. Munsell's *A Color Notation*, which American teacher Clara Carter recommended for use in the Philippine schools in her manual. But this inculcation of a particular aesthetic preference was also tied directly to a concern that did not inform art pedagogy in the metropole: the creation of saleable works by schoolchildren for domestic and export

markets. Indeed, the Bureau of Education instituted its own in-house General Sales Department explicitly for this purpose.[19]

Sometimes, coercion shaded into force, as may be seen in the approach U.S. administrators took to the aesthetic side of school secularization, particularly during the initial period when the schools run by the United States were not newly constructed but appropriated from the old Catholic regime. The approach taken by the superintendent of schools in Manila, David Prescott Barrows, an anthropologist and later president of the University of California, was quite severe. He "ordered the removal of all crucifixes, statues, pictures, and religious symbols from walls, doorways, and roof tops of all classroom buildings."[20]

Although Barrows's purge is an extreme instance of U.S. officials' attempts at aesthetic (and hence, ideological) control through the schools, it is indicative of the more pervasive way in which the creation of an imperial American aesthetic and ideological order depended upon the suppression of alternatives. Consider the reconfiguration of the school calendar, which as has been noted affected the production and reproduction of American iconography and ritual. This process had another, negative aspect: the supplanting of the old calendar—including not only the excision of old political holidays but the radical diminution of Catholic holy days—and the intensely visual and material celebrations that accompanied them. This ritual and iconographic displacement of the old regime took place alongside corollary policies also aimed at suppressing revolutionary icons and practices, notably the notorious Flag Law of 1907 forbidding "Filipinos to use or display the Philippine flag anywhere, even inside Filipino homes."[21]

In light of the many works and practices associated with the U.S.-Philippine relationship that have never been analyzed, it would be too soon to make a final conclusion regarding the place of that relationship in American art. Future scholars might address a number of important subjects that this essay has not been able to consider: for example, the responses of ordinary people to the visual and material transformations they experienced, and the roles played by Filipino architects and artists like Juan Arellano who directly shaped the creation of a new political landscape in the U.S. era. What may be argued safely for the moment is that that relationship, and the tumultuous dynamic within it between creation and destruction, ought to be a subject of sustained inquiry in the years to come.

Notes

1. Luis H. Francia, "Introduction: The Rind of Things," in *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream*, ed. Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia (New York: New York University Press, 2002), xxiii.

2. David Brody, "Fantasy Realized: The Philippines, Orientalism, and Imperialism in Turn-of-the-Century American Visual Culture," Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1997, xviii; Thomas S. Hines,

"The Imperial Façade: Daniel H. Burnham and American Architectural Planning in the Philippines," *Pacific Historical Review* 41, no. 1 (February 1972): 33–53, quote at 33.

3. Glenn Anthony May, *Social Engineering in the Philippines* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); Adam T. Smith, *The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Polities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

4. Little has been published on the Legislative building, but informative text panels outlining its history were installed in the building after its renovation. For a comment on Spain's employment of neoclassicism, see A. N. Rebori, "The Work of William E. Parsons in the Philippine Islands," Part I, *Architectural Record* 41 (April 1917): 305.

5. The album made by Maud and Luther Parker is Album—Filipiana Division, 2 vols., National Library of the Philippines, Special Collections, n.d. Many other images in the album are also of institutional architecture or the performance of rituals associated with U.S. political culture (often within a specific architectural setting). Examples include a photograph of a parade on the Fourth of July, 1903, taken outside the old Manila Post Office; a postcard of the Philippine General Hospital; a photo of "Maud N. Parker presiding at the First Woman's Club Convention ever held in the Phil. Islands," dated 1917, and numerous images of schools. The Parkers' correlation of architectural and geopolitical aims paralleled Rebori's interpretation of Parsons's work as "a lasting tribute to the period of our Government's constructive interest in the Philippines." Rebori, "Work of William E. Parsons," I, 309.

6. See, for example, John N. Choate, *Carlisle Girls and Boys in School Uniform with Two Women School Teachers (?), Under Gazebo*, 1879, a black-and-white gelatin glass negative in the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (NAA Inv. 06804900).

7. See Underwood & Underwood, *Co. L, 12th U.S. Infantry, on the Luneta, Manila, Philippines*, 1899, and *Honoring the soldier who lived and died a hero—Caisson bearing Gen. Lawton's remains on the Luneta, Manila*, 1899, both held by the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution (RSN 17021 and RSN 26439). For a discussion of alterations to the Luneta, see W. E. Parsons, "Manila Old and New," *Western Architect* 17, no. 1 (January 1911): 9–11. Philippine Curio Agency, *No. 104 La Luneta, Manila*, n.d. National Anthropological Archives, (NAA INV 05175600). A photograph by Squires & Bingham from the same vantage point is reproduced in George A. Miller, *Interesting Manila* (Manila: Central Methodist Episcopal Church, 1906), 42.

8. The logo and dates of activity of the Lambert-Springer Co. (1909–20) are identified in Conrado F. Ciriaco, *Catalogue of Philippine Picture Postcards: American Period: 1898 to 1941* ([Manila]: Conrado F. Ciriaco, 1995), 12. *Southern California: Illustrated with Drawings from Nature and from Photographs by Louise M. Keeler*, 80th ed. (Santa Fe: Santa Fe Railroad, 1901).

9. Michael Salman, "'The Prison That Makes Men Free': The Iwahig Penal Colony and the Simulacra of the American State in the Philippines," in ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 116–26. The passage of the "Brigandage Act" or "Bandolerismo Statute" is discussed in Zwick, "Mark Twain's Anti-Imperialist Writings in the 'American Century,'" in Shaw and Francia, *Vestiges of War*, 38–56, see esp. 39.

10. Besides the works in Francia and Shaw's volume, important exceptions include Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000) and Sharon Delmendo, *The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of America in the Philippines* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004). "Canonization": see Brody, "Fantasy Realized," chapter 3, quote at 114. On Burnham's preservationism see David Brody, "Building Empire: Architecture and American Imperialism in the Philippines," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2001): 123–45, quote at 127, doi:10.1353/jaas.2001.0013; Hines emphasizes that Parsons also took "Burnham's lead in deferring, whenever possible, to older Spanish and Philippine landmarks" in Thomas S. Hines, "American Modernism in the Philippines: The Forgotten Architecture of William E. Parsons," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32, no. 4 (December 1973): 316–26, quote at 319, doi:10.2307/988922.

11. See J. M. Mancini, "Sovereignty Trouble: The United States, the Catholic Political Landscape, and Regime Change in the Philippines," forthcoming and presented in versions at the State University of New York, Brockport, 2009; Yale University; Institute for Advanced Study; College Art Association, Chicago; Princeton University; and European Association for American Studies, Dublin, 2010.

12. Rebori, "The Work of William E. Parsons," I, 319. U.S. military governors briefly used the Ayuntamiento, often misidentified in photographs as "the Palace," as a headquarters until 1903; see H.C. White Co., *The palace, headquarters of Maj. Gen. MacArthur, Manila, P. I., 1901*, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Stereograph LOT 12605. Under U.S. rule, the Plaza of the Martyrs was given the vague name Plaza España. Burnham's remit did not include military structures, and Fort Santiago continued to be used as it had been during the war. For useful notes on sites in Intramuros, see www.intramurosadministration.com/home.htm.

13. Hines, "American Modernism in the Philippines," 319, 316. Parker's position is noted in Luther Parker, "Notes on the Direction and Limits of Industrial Work," *Philippine Craftsman* 1, no. 1 (July 1912): 48–53.

14. The destruction of Guadalupe is discussed in the early guidebook that used the phrase "Queen of the Ruins," Miller's *Interesting Manila*, 142, but that book does not mention the more widespread destruction of churches. See Archdiocese of Manila, *Catálogo de las reclamaciones que por daños y perjuicios inferidos a la Iglesia Católica de Filipinas presenta al gobierno de los Estados Unidos de América el Arzobispado de Manila y los obispados sufraganeos* (Manila : Imp. de 'El Mercantil,' 1903), 11–15, 171–73, and Mancini, "Sovereignty Trouble." In 1920 the Guadalupe ruins still "featured in all the guide books"; *Facts and Figures about the Philippines* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1920), 53.

15. "Calendar for 1904–1905," Bureau of Education, *The Philippine School of Arts and Trades, Manila, P.I., 1905–1905* (Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 1904), inside front cover.

16. Images of a dormitory, the Women's Dormitory of the Normal School in Manila, may be seen in Rebori, "Work of William E. Parsons," 318–19. As Kenton J. Clymer notes, dormitories became an important institutional space for American Protestant missionaries in light of the official policy of secularization: "if religion could not be taught in the schools . . . then the mission had to reach the students through dormitories"; Clymer, "Religion and American Imperialism: Methodist Missionaries in the Philippine Islands, 1899–1913," *Pacific Historical Review* 49, no. 1 (February 1980): 29–50, see 49. Bureau of Education, *School Buildings: Plans, Specifications, and Bills of Material for Standard Revised School Buildings of the Bureau of Education* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1912); Bureau of Education, *School Buildings and Grounds* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1912).

17. [Clara O. Carter], *Course of Study in Drawing for Normal Schools* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1929), 14.

18. The postcards are in the collection of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution; Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1911.

19. Glenn May convincingly argues that the emphasis on vocational and manual education of American administrators derived from the approach of Booker T. Washington; May, *Social Engineering in the Philippines*, 89–93. Hines, "Imperial Façade," 44. See the Department of Public Instruction of the Bureau of Education's Philippine Craftsman Reprint Series No. 1, *Philippine Mats* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1913), 12–13; [Carter], *Course of Study in Drawing for Normal Schools*, 8. Director of Education Luther B. Bewley wrote in his introduction to *Catalog of Handwoven Products of the Philippine Public Schools* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1920), "The purpose of this catalog is to disseminate information on the standard handwoven articles made in Philippine public schools and, by so doing, to help the General Sales Department of the Bureau of Education to find buyers, both here and abroad, for these articles."

20. Frank T. Reuter, "American Catholics and the Establishment of the Philippine Public School System," *Catholic Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (October 1963): 374.

21. This is not to say that the reconfiguration of the calendar completely eclipsed prior Catholic holidays or excluded Filipino heroes. As the 1904–05 calendar of Manila's School of Arts and Trades suggests, the U.S. administration preserved All Saints' Day and two holidays devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Rizal Day, established to commemorate the 1896 martyrdom by Spain of the nationalist intellectual José Rizal, explicitly incorporated into the new pantheon a Filipino hero whose heroism did not challenge U.S. hegemony. Bureau of Education, *The Philippine School of Arts and Trades, Manila, P.I., 1905–1905* (Manila: Bureau of Public Printing, 1904). On memorializing Rizal see Delmendo, *The Star-Entangled Banner*. Chris Antonette Piedad-Pugay, 'The Controversial Philippine National Flag', National Historical Institute, www.nhi.gov.ph/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=26.

Before Zen

The Nothing of American Dada

Jacquelynn Baas

One of the challenges confronting our modern era has been how to resolve the subject-object dichotomy proposed by Descartes and refined by Newton—the belief that reality consists of matter and motion, and that all questions can be answered by means of the scientific method of objective observation and measurement. This egocentric perspective has been cast into doubt by evidence from quantum mechanics that matter and motion are interdependent forms of energy and that the observer is always in an experiential relationship with the observed.[1] To understand ourselves as interconnected beings who experience time and space rather than being subject to them takes a radical shift of perspective, and artists have been at the leading edge of this exploration. From Marcel Duchamp and Dada to John Cage and Fluxus, to William T. Wiley and his West Coast colleagues, to the recent international explosion of participatory artwork, artists have been trying to get us to change how we see. Nor should it be surprising that in our global era Asian perspectives regarding the nature of reality have been a crucial factor in effecting this shift.[2]

The 2009 Guggenheim exhibition *The Third Mind* emphasized the importance of Asian philosophical and spiritual texts in the development of American modernism.[3] Zen Buddhism especially was of great interest to artists and writers in the United States following World War II. The histories of modernism traced by the exhibition reflected the well-documented influence of Zen, but did not include another, earlier link—that of Daoism and American Dada.

For my part, I confess that when I wrote my 2005 book about manifestations of Asian philosophy within Western art, I did not really understand

Daoism.[4] The blending of Daoism and Buddhism over the centuries has made it difficult to separate these two philosophical and religious systems when looking for their putative influence within Western art. Indeed, the full range of resources drawn upon by Marcel Duchamp and his colleagues in the United States is so varied that any new understanding of the relevance of particular Asian traditions to their work provides only fragmentary evidence of these artists' interests and intentions. The evidence of their attraction to Daoism has been largely overlooked until recently and is still regarded in some quarters as insufficiently intellectual or theoretical.[5] Yet it was precisely the anti-intellectual and anti-theoretical nature of American Dada that Daoism helped to nourish. Drawing on the dynamic concept of reality contained in the *Dao de jing* and the anti-authoritarianism and ironic humor of Zhuangzi, American Dada developed a framework for deconstructing traditional Western understandings of the nature of knowledge—a framework that was at once deeply serious and emphatically humorous.

Daoism has assumed many forms in response to changing conditions. The primary text is the *Dao de jing,* a collection of verses traditionally attributed to Laozi. *Dao de jing* can be translated as "The Classic of This Focus and Its Field," and one of its central assumptions is that "each particular element in our experience is holographic in the sense that it has implicated within it the entire field of experience." Access to this double view of reality is achieved by recognizing the unifying energy—*qi* ("chi")—that flows to us from the world and back into it. Once realized, this skill is put into service for humanity in an effective yet diffuse and inconspicuous manner, in keeping with the elusive principles of the *Dao*.[6]

In contrast with the poetic *Dao de jing*, the anecdotal accounts of Zhuangzi and his followers are laced with emphatic anti-authoritarianism. *Zhuangzi*'s anecdotes came to stand for the opposite of Confucianism's ethos of self-sacrifice: specifically, escape from societal pressure to an individual path of freedom, often through the liberating power of humor. According to Burton Watson, Zhuangzi "appears to have known that one good laugh would do more than ten pages of harangue to shake the reader's confidence in the validity of his past assumptions."[7]

"DADA MEANS NOTHING," reads the first heading of Tristan Tzara's *Dada Manifesto 1918*. The following year, Raoul Hausmann similarly characterized Dada as "nothing, *i.e.*, everything," and Francis Picabia, in his own "Dada Manifesto" of 1920 wrote, "[I]t's doing something so that the public can say: 'We understand nothing, nothing, nothing,'" signing his manifesto, "Francis Picabia / who knows nothing, nothing, nothing." In 1921 Marcel Duchamp told a reporter, "Dada is nothing. For instance

the Dadaists say that everything is nothing; nothing is good, nothing is interesting, nothing is important." And in 1922 Tzara asserted, "Dada applies itself to everything, and yet it is nothing. It is the point where the yes and the no and all the opposites meet, not solemnly in the castles of human philosophies, but very simply at street corners, like dogs."[8]

Where did this anti-intellectual ideal of "nothing" come from? According to those most directly involved, an important source was Daoism, specifically the Daoist notion of "inner-alchemy," the goal of which, according to Thomas Cleary, is "autonomy, the freedom to be or not to be, to do or not do, according to the needs of the situation at hand. . . . The adept is said to transcend yin and yang [male and female], reaching an undefinable state in which one 'does nothing yet does anything.'"[9] Acknowledging the debt to Daoism, Tzara claimed, "Chouang-Dsi [Zhuangzi] was just as Dada as we are. You are mistaken if you take Dada for a modern school, or even for a reaction against the schools of today." He went on to characterize Dada in terms usually applied to Daoism: "Dada is a state of mind. That is why it transforms itself according to races and events." Hans Arp similarly stressed the Daoist taproot of Dada: "Dada objects are made of found or manufactured elements, simple or incongruous. The Chinese several millenniums ago, Duchamp and Picabia in the United States, and Schwitters and myself during World War I, were the first to invent and spread these games of wisdom and acumen that were meant to cure human beings of the sheer madness of genius and to lead them back more modestly to their proper place in nature."[10]

Like Arp, who specified Duchamp and Picabia's work "in the United States," Richard Huelsenbeck emphasized the American context in his introduction to the 1920 *Dada Almanac*: "One cannot understand Dada; one must experience it. . . . Dada is the neutral point between content and form, male and female, matter and spirit. . . . Dada is the American aspect of Buddhism; it blusters because it knows how to be quiet; it agitates because it is at peace." Huelsenbeck cites Buddhism, but his language is Daoist. This may suggest a certain lack of clarity—perhaps not surprising from artists interested in Asian philosophies primarily as resources for their own work—but should not be confused with a naïve "Orientalism." As the poet Walter Mehring observed in "Unveilings," also published in the *Dada Almanac*: "The East Asian Society protests at the way Dada is wrecking Asiatic culture."[11]

Buddhism absorbed key Daoist concepts when it reached China, where Chan (in Japanese: Zen) Buddhism was one result. And Daoism returned the favor, generating hybrid practices that might be labeled "DABU." *Tao* is the Wade-Giles system of romanization, *Dao* the more recent pinyin. TABU—a contraction of the first two letters of the words "Tao" and "Buddha"—was, in fact, what Marcel Duchamp's brother-in-law, Jean Crotti, called the version of Dada that he and Suzanne Duchamp

1. Morton Livingston Schamberg and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *God*, ca. 1917. Wood miter box and cast iron plumbing trap, height: 12 3/8 in.; base: 3 × 4 3/4 × 11 5/8 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

practiced in Paris during the early 1920s.[12] Significantly, Crotti dated his "second birth" to 1915, the year he moved into a New York studio with Marcel Duchamp.[13]

What was it about Daoism that might have offered a resource for artists around the time of the First World War? Several things, including Daoism's sexually charged view of the cosmos as a continuously self-balancing system; its emphases on perception and perspective; and perhaps most important, its assumption of the self-transforming power of the individual and rejection of social conventions and definitions.[14] There is yet another aspect of Daoism that would have appealed to these artists: the Daoist view of creativity. In their philosophical analysis of the *Dao de jing*, Roger Ames and David Hall point out that in the Judeo-Christian worldview, with its omnipotent "maker," "all subsequent acts of 'creativity' are in fact secondary and derivative exercises of power." In contrast, real creativity "can make sense only in a [Daoist] processual world that admits of ontological parity among its constitutive events and of the spontaneous emergence of novelty. . . . Creativity is always reflexive and is exercised over and with respect to 'self.' And since self in a processive world is always communal, creativity is contextual, transactional, and multidimensional."[15] This analysis reads like a recipe for Dada artworks, which, as Arp wrote, tend to be "made of found or manufactured elements, simple or incongruous."

It also challenges the art-historical impulse to establish precise authorship for Dada objects and events. Consider *God* (Figure 1), an upside-down plumbing trap affixed to a wooden miter box by the German-born Dada artist and poet Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and the Philadelphia painter Morton Livingston Schamberg, a piece that combines Schamberg's rigor with von Freytag-Loringhoven's talent for shock.[16] The title, *God*, might be interpreted humorously, or at least ironically. Indeed, attached to

an unglamorous, usually hidden portion of a plumbing fixture, the title has been read as both, but this does not fully address the artists' intent. How might someone versed in both Daoism and modern plumbing experience this piece, along with its title?

A plumbing trap is a low point in the evacuation of waste, creating a water seal that prevents sewer gas from passing into occupied space. It thus "traps" the free flow of air and, thanks to gravity, it tends to trap other things as well—traps are notorious villains in backed-up plumbing scenarios. Daoism emphasizes the importance of open, uncomplicated, free flow. In fact, the earliest appearance of the word *dao* in the ancient Chinese *Book of Documents* has to do with cutting a channel to prevent the overflowing of riverbanks.[17] From a Daoist perspective, then, *God* evokes the ironic and—yes—funny concept of a constipated omnipotent supreme being, along with the serious thought that there might be other possibilities for conceiving the workings of the universe.

There is another reason *God* is a quintessential example of Dada's Daoist perspective—its existence as embodied metaphor. Because the concepts of Daoism are so abstract, the language of Daoism is the language of metaphor. Nature is a primary source of metaphorical meaning, but so is technology, which is fundamentally the harnessing and channeling of natural forces. The wheel, for example, becomes a metaphor for the fecundity of nothingness in chapter 11 of the *Dao de jing*:

> *The thirty spokes converge at one hub,*
> *But the utility of the cart is a function of the nothingness inside the hub. . . .*
> *Thus, it might be something that provides the value,*
> *But it is nothing that provides the utility.*[18]

"Cart" might be any vehicle; substitute "art" and we have, "Thirty spokes converge at one hub, but the utility of the art is a function of the nothingness inside"—an image that suggests Duchamp's first readymade, *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), and his concept of the "art coefficient" or "gap." Duchamp believed that, "What art is in reality is this missing link, not the links which exist. It's not what you see that is art, art is the gap."[19]

Machine technology became American Dada's metaphor, and Daoist inner alchemical descriptions of the rotational circulation of *qi*-energy throughout the body as a hydraulic process, and the intensification of *qi* through a kind of shifting of gears, seems to have provided a model. As early as 1911, Marcel Duchamp integrated the mechanical draftsman's dotted line and directional arrow into his otherwise painterly *Coffee Mill*. Duchamp described this coffee grinder as something "which I made to explode; the grounds are tumbling down beside it; the gear wheels are above, and the knob is seen simultaneously at several points in its circuit, with an arrow to indicate

2. Francis Picabia, *Comic Wedlock*, 1914. Oil on canvas, 6 ft. 5 3/8 in. × 6 ft. 6 3/4 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Collection, Given by their family © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photo © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York.

movement. Without knowing it, I had opened a window onto something else." When pressed about whether *Coffee Mill* had any "symbolic significance," Duchamp replied: "None at all," adding: "It was a sort of escape hatch. You know, I've always felt this need to escape myself." As a "window" or "escape hatch," *Coffee Mill* seems to have served not as a symbol of, but a metaphor for escape from habits of perceiving and experiencing reality.[20]

Another catalyst for American artists was Duchamp's close friend, Francis Picabia, who arrived in New York at the beginning of June 1915, two weeks before Duchamp. The preceding year, in Paris, Picabia had incorporated a Daoist *yin-yang* symbol into *Comic Wedlock* (Figure 2), a painting whose theme was likely influenced by Duchamp's 1912–13 plans for *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–23). At this time, Duchamp's influence on Picabia's work was evident more in terms of content than style. Still resolutely wrestling with abstraction, Picabia's use of the yin-yang form was anomalous in both its specificity and its symbolic intent.

Marius de Zayas, in Paris in 1914 on a scouting mission on behalf of Alfred Stieglitz's gallery 291, suggested a show of Picabia's recent paintings to follow a planned Picasso show. "Picasso represents in his work the . . . action of matter on the senses," de Zayas wrote Stieglitz, "while Picabia's work is the expression of pure thought. Picasso could never work without dealing with objectivity while Picabia forgets matter to express only, maybe the memory of something that has happened."[21] The "maybe" suggests hesitation on de Zayas's part. One thing seems clear: "the memory of something that has happened" was a mental something that—at least in the case of *Comic Wedlock*—had to do with copulation that was not sensual. Other titles of Picabia paintings from this time likewise suggest an experiential mental realm—*Udnie*, a scrambling and contraction of "Uni-dimensionnel"; and *Edtaonisl*, derived from "Etoile danseuse," or "Star Dancer" (note the *tao* in *Edtaonisl*).[22] Picabia was struggling to give sensual form to mental experience in Paris. It is paradoxically perfect

that the door to representation of the "uni-dimensional" or immaterial would finally open to him in the context of the resolutely material culture of the United States.

Upon his arrival, Picabia immersed himself in the goings-on surrounding Stieglitz's gallery. The July-August 1915 issue of the large-format journal *291*, a successor to Stieglitz's *Camera Work* edited by de Zayas, featured six powerful Picabia portrait-drawings of 291 associates for which machines and technology provided the metaphors and American advertising the model. Picabia's "portrait" of Stieglitz appeared on the cover (Figure 3).

3. Francis Picabia, *Ici, C'est Ici Stieglitz Foi et Amour*, 1915. Relief print on paper, 14 15/16 × 9 in. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Katharine Graham © 2011 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Photo © 2011 National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

That Picabia intended to portray Stieglitz as an apostle of American modernism seems clear from the inscription: "Here, here is Stieglitz, faith, and love"—surely an affectionate riff on the apostle Paul's assurance to the Corinthians, "So abide faith, hope, and love." Here, Stieglitz is the hope. Picabia's icon for Stieglitz is made up of two mechanical elements: a camera with its bellows detached, preventing recording of exterior images on the photographic plate; and a similarly disengaged brake and gearshift—controls for starting and stopping.[23] Only the lens at the top of the camera seems to be in active mode, stretched heavenward, as if anticipating Stieglitz's future cloud-portrait "equivalents," and focused on the word, "IDEAL."

The detached bellows has elicited a wide range of comments about its possible meaning, from implications regarding Stieglitz's sexual potency to Picabia's supposed opinion of the success of gallery 291.[24] From the Daoist perspective, however, the bellows may suggest something quite different. A bellows is the expandable part of a camera, but it is also a device for generating a strong current of air. In chapter five of the *Dao de jing*, the bellows becomes a technological metaphor for the indeterminate source of spontaneous and inexhaustible phenomena: "What is between the heavens and the earth resembles a bellows that is empty yet never

4. Alfred Stieglitz, *Songs of the Sky in Five Pictures (No. 3)*, 1923. Gelatin silver print, 4 5/8 × 3 1/2 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Alfred Stieglitz © 2011 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo © 2011 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

exhausted; put into motion, it yields more and more."[25]

In Daoism, the earth is conceived as *yin*—female/receptive/dark—and the heavens as *yang*—male/aggressive/light. They are opposites whose union generates constantly morphing phenomena. What Picabia's detached bellows implies is that Stieglitz is a catalyst for change, but his "camera work" cannot be portrayed only in terms of the mechanically recordable visible world. Stieglitz called this his "'anti-photographic' search—the vision of both the inner and the outer eye"[26]—a double view of reality conveyed in the famous first chapter of the *Dao de jing*:

> *Nameless is the source of heaven and earth; named, it is the mother of all things.*
> *This is why when one is steadily free of the passions, one sees one's spiritual essence; immersed in the sensual, one sees bounded form.*
> *These two things have a single origin and are called by different names.*
> *One calls them both profound. They are profound, doubly deep. This is the portal to all things.*[27]

Picabia's brake and gearshift may refer to what is required in order to achieve this complete vision of reality. Having both your gearshift and brake disengaged just might be the perfect modern metaphor for being "steadily free of the passions."

Picabia's "ideal" is printed in German gothic type—perhaps a reference to Stieglitz's German background and education. Jay Bochner has written insightfully about how often the word "ideal" appears in Picabia's work, "in exactly the same position on the page as here": hovering at the top.[28] But it is also helpful to look at what Stieglitz had to say about his cloud-portraits (Figure 4):

> *Are the sky and water not one, if one truly sees them? Are they not, after all, to be seen as interchangeable? In fact, I feel that all experiences in life are one, if truly seen. . . . How is it possible to conceive of black without white? Why reject either the one or the other, since both exist? I feel the duality of world forces forever at work. But it is when conflict hovers about a point—a focal point—and light is in the ascendancy, that I am moved.*[29]

Stieglitz's *yin-yang* "focal point" found an earlier manifestation as a point of light in Duchamp's *Fountain*, surely the exemplar of how Dada artworks served as "contextual, transactional, and multidimensional" objects of public art practice. A photograph of *Fountain* (Figure 5) taken at 291 by Alfred Stieglitz (and the only surviving visual record of the piece) appeared in the same issue of *The Blind Man* as Louise Norton's apologia "Buddha of the Bathroom." According to Beatrice Wood, the artist who apparently made the first contact with Stieglitz about taking the picture, Stieglitz and Duchamp had a long discussion about how to photograph the piece. Stieglitz, Wood wrote, "took great pains with the lighting."[30]

5. Alfred Stieglitz, photograph of Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, as published in Beatrice Wood, *The Blind Man*, No. 2, May 1917. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

Duchamp had signed the urinal "R. Mutt," purportedly after Mott ironworks, a plumbing supply company. Mutt, pronounced with a French accent, sounds like the English word "moot," which can mean "meeting" (evoking Tzara's two dogs, or mutts, meeting); or "mute"—"silent"; but also perhaps shorthand for "mutable" (the same word in both French and English), meaning "changeable."[31] "A female friend of mine," Duchamp wrote his sister Suzanne, "using a male pseudonym, . . . submitted a porcelain urinal as a sculpture." In a letter to Georgia O'Keeffe, Stieglitz indicated that he, too, was under the impression that a young woman had submitted the urinal.[32] It is possible Duchamp was simply acknowledging the participation of one of his many women friends in this caper, but it seems at least as likely that the ambisexual authorship of *Fountain* reflected how Duchamp, shortly to become Rrose Sélavy (his female alter-ego), understood *himself*.

Daoism emphasizes the vital role of *yin*, the female aspect of the world. Chapter six of the *Dao de jing* expands upon the portal or gateway metaphor we encountered in chapter one, and the generative, self-replenishing bellows-energy of chapter five:

> *The life-force of the valley never dies; this is called the mysterious female.*
> *The gateway of the mysterious female is called the root of heaven and of earth.*
> *It is endless and only seems to be there.*
> *Using it, one never tires.*[33]

"In this chapter and pervasively in the text," Ames and Hall write, "the image of the dark, moist, and accommodatingly vacant interior of the vagina is used as an analogy for [the fecundity of emptiness]." The *Dao de jing* presents the female aspect as something to be cultivated. In chapter 28, we read:

> *Know the male*
> *Yet safeguard the female*
> *And be a river gorge to the world.*
> *As a river gorge to the world,*
> *You will not lose your real potency,*
> *And not losing your real potency,*
> *You return to the state of the newborn babe.*[34]

The return of the mind to its original, pre-conditioned state—the mind of a "newborn babe"—is the goal of Daoist practice in general, and Daoist inner alchemical practice in particular. Lydie Fischer Sarazin-Levassor, who was briefly married to Duchamp in 1927, quoted his advice to her: "Find yourself, the pure self, like a child newborn. . . . An equilibrium is maintained, as in chess. You have to try to see everything as if for the first time, all the time."[35] A Daoist metaphor for this mental equilibrium is a pearl of light between and behind the eyes—the "center of spirit" in Daoist meditation practice. This "focal point," to use Stieglitz's term, is clearly visible, thanks to his careful lighting, in the "head" of the Buddha into which Stieglitz and Duchamp transformed a urinal.[36]

Another notable feature of this photograph of *Fountain* is the moist darkness of the protruding hole where the genitals would be, a feature that emphasizes its womb-like aspect, and which would surface again over 50 years later in Duchamp's *Étant donnés*. To truly comprehend what strikes the American mind (still!) as Duchamp's shocking exploitation of sexuality, is to understand why *Fountain* was not a cynical gesture of "pissing on" the establishment, but an affectionate, humorous, and tough-minded *koan*-like Daoist challenge to both the American art community and the American public.

"Behind [Duchamp's] works, another world *really* exists," his friend Robert Lebel asserted. About the unintelligibility of these works, Lebel wrote: "because of what he calls his 'delay in glass,' [Duchamp] seems to have had in mind the anonymity of future archaeological excavations, after the final collapse of our own civilization."[37] As we approach the hundredth anniversary of the start of the *Large Glass* and the fiftieth anniversary of the completion of *Étant donnés*, could we be witnessing the "final

collapse" of the walls that frame our Western civilization and its materialist view of reality? Can we be archaeologists enough to recognize the reality contained within Duchamp's "delay in glass"? Dada artworks were not intended to inspire disinterested contemplation or intellectual cognition; they are metaphors for reality, nothings intended to open the world's mind to new somethings. "Dada never preached," Tristan Tzara wrote in 1953, in a statement translated by Duchamp; "having no theory to defend, it showed truths in action and it is as action that what is commonly called art will henceforth have to be considered."[38]

Notes

1. For some implications, see Robert Lanza with Bob Berman, *Biocentrism: How Life and Consciousness are the Keys to Understanding the True Nature of the Universe* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2009).

2. As Edward Carpenter wrote early in the last century, "Forty or fifty years ago the materialistic view of the world was much in evidence. . . . Since then, however, partly through a natural reaction and partly through the influx of Eastern ideas, there has been a great swing of the pendulum"; Carpenter, *The Art of Creation: Essays on the Self and Its Powers* (1904; London: G. Allen, 1907), 10.

3. Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009).

4. Jacquelynn Baas, *Smile of the Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art from Monet to Today* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

5. An important factor has been the post-war intellectual tendency to define Daoist/Buddhist perspectives as "spiritual" rather than as theories of mind, to be dismissed along with theosophy and other forms of Western occultism and "new age" philosophy. This may change, thanks to the investigations of neuroscientists like Jill Bolte Taylor; see, for example, Taylor's *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006).

6. Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing "Making This Life Significant": A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine, 2003), 13, 60, 18. Thomas Cleary, *The Taoist Classics*, vol. 1 (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 3–4.

7. Burton Watson, *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 5.

8. For the Tzara quotes, see Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* (Boston: G. K. Hall, [1951] 1981), 77, 251. Raoul Hausmann, "Was ist dada?" [text collage], *Der Dada*, no. 2, ed. Hausmann (Berlin 1919); reprinted Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, 1972, 8; trans. and quoted by Dorothée Brill, *Shock and the Senseless in Dada and Fluxus* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2010), 72. Francis Picabia, "Dada Manifesto," trans. Margaret I. Lippard from *391*, no. 12 (Paris, March 1920), published in Lucy R. Lippard, ed., *Dadas on Art: Tzara, Arp, Duchamp and Others* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 166. For the Duchamp quote, see Margery Rex, "'Dada' Will Get You if You Don't Watch Out: It Is on the Way Here," *New York Evening Journal*, 29 January 1921; quoted by Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada* (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), 140.

9. Early western translations of *Dao de jing* and *Zhuangzi* include, Stanislas Julien, *Le Livre de la voie et de la vertu par le philosophe Lao-Tseu* (Paris: L'Imprimerie Royale, 1842) and John Chalmers, *The Speculations on Metaphysics, Polity, and Morality of "The Old Philosopher," Lau-Tse* (London: Trubner, 1868). Also important were James Legge's "The Texts of Taoism," vols. 39 and 40 of F. Max Müller, ed., *The Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891); Paul Carus, *Lao-Tze's Tao-The-King* (Chicago: Open Court, 1898), *Chinese Philosophy* (1902), and *Chinese Thought* (1907); and Léon Wieger, *Taoïsme*, 2 vols. (Xian Xian: Imp. de Xian Xian, 1911–13). For the quote, see Thomas Cleary, *Understanding Reality: A Taoist Alchemical Classic by Chang Po-tuan with a Concise Commentary by Liu I-ming* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 5.

10. For the Tzara quote, see Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets,* 250, 251. Jean (Hans) Arp , "Dadaland" (1948), in *Collected French Writings: Poems, Essays, Memories*, ed. Marcel Jean, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974), 235.

11. Richard Huelsenbeck, *The Dada Almanac* (Berlin, 1920), ed. and trans. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas, 1993), 9–10, 75.

12. A similar interpretation, minus Daoism, was offered by Jean-Hubert Martin, who pointed out that inverting the syllables of TABU yields BUTA, a pun on "Buddha" ("TABU: Artistic Movement or Religion?" in *TABU DADA: Jean Crotti & Suzanne Duchamp, 1915–1922*, ed. William A. Camfield and Jean-Hubert Martin [Kunsthalle Bern, 1983], 88). Buddhist as well as Daoist concepts abound in Crotti's art and writings, which warrant further study.

13. See Crotti's autobiographical statement regarding his "second birth . . . without umbilical cord" reproduced in Camfield and Martin, *TABU DADA*, 82; "Chronology," 129.

14. For a period discussion of Daoism's radical anti-authoritarianism, see Charles F. Horne, *The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East*, vol. 12, Medieval China (New York: Parke, Austin, and Lipscomb, 1917), 2.

15. Ames and Hall, *Daodejing*, 17.

16. On the authorship of this work, see Michael R. Taylor, "New York," in *Dada*, ed. Leah Dickerson (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2006), 289.

17. Ames and Hall, *Daodejing*, 57.

18. Ibid., 91.

19. Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (1969; New York: Abrams, 1970), 197.

20. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Rod Padgett (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987), 31. I have modified the translations, substituting "grounds" for "coffee" (*poudre* in the French) and changing "loophole" to "escape hatch" (*une sorte d'échappatoire*). For more on *Coffee Mill*, see *Smile of the Buddha*, 83, 85.

21. From a letter of 30 June 1914, in the Alfred Stieglitz Archive, Yale University, quoted in William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 68.

22. On these titles see Roger I. Rothman, "Between Music and the Machine," *Toutfait*, vol. 2, issue 4, 2002, note 14 (www.toutfait.com). On the intersection of Stieglitz, Picabia, and a "machine aesthetic" see Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, 77ff.

23. See Jay Bochner, *An American Lens* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 144.

24. Pepe Karmel cogently observes that the bellows appears to have collapsed because it has torn loose from the lens, which is unnaturally extended in its pursuit of the ideal; see Karmel, "Francis Picabia, 1915: The Sex of a New Machine," in *Alfred Stieglitz and His New York Galleries*, ed. Sarah Greenough (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2000), 216–17.

25. Julien, *Le Livre de la voie*, 18 (texts from Julien are the author's translation).

26. Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: Introduction to an American Seer* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1960), 20.

27. Julien, *Le Livre de la voie*, 2.

28. Bochner, *American Lens*, 145.

29. Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 36.

30. Beatrice Wood, *I Shock Myself: The Autobiography of Beatrice Wood* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1985), 30. See also William A. Camfield, "Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*: Its History and Aesthetics in the Context of 1917," in *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Francis M. Naumann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 74.

31. Duchamp's homosexual friend Charles Demuth spelled Mutt "Mutte" in a letter to an art critic from mid-April 1917. (Camfield, "Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*," 72 and 90 n. 28, where Camfield speculates that "the 'e' added to Mutt in this letter may have been intended to suggest a female identity.")

32. Duchamp letter of April 11, 1917, in Francis E. Naumann and Hector Obalk, eds., *Affectionately Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* (Ghent: Ludion Press, 2000), 47. Stieglitz's letter is summarized by Camfield in Kuenzli and Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 91 n. 39. Duchamp

may have asked Beatrice Wood to make the first contact with Stieglitz precisely to give him this impression; but she recorded that it was Duchamp who worked with Stieglitz on the actual photography of the piece.

33. Julien, *Le Livre de la voie*, 21.

34. Ames and Hall, *Daodejing*, 86, 120.

35. Lydie Fischer Sarazin-Levassor, *A Marriage in Check: The Heart of the Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelor, Even*, trans. Paul Edwards (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2007), 48.

36. Lu K'uan yü (Charles Luk), *Taoist Yoga: Alchemy & Immortality* (San Francisco: Weiser Books, 1973), xvi ("prenatal vitality [is] transmuted into a bright pearl that illuminates the brain"). Stieglitz himself described the form as that of a Buddha; see Camfield in Kuenzli and Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 75–76.

37. Robert Lebel, "Portrait of Marcel Duchamp as a Dropout," in *Étant donné*, no. 7, 2006, 74. Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, trans. George Heard Hamilton (New York: Paragraphic Books, 1959), 69.

38. From the broadside "catalogue" to the exhibition, "DADA 1916–1923," Sidney Janis Gallery, April 15 to May 9, 1953.

Knowledge and Hierarchy

Global Knowledge in the Early Republic

The East India Marine Society's "Curiosities" Museum

Patricia Johnston

On a cold January day in 1804, the Reverend William Bentley, pastor of the East Church, stood and watched a strange and exotic parade weaving through the streets of Salem, Massachusetts. A number of sea captains, who had just returned from Sumatra, Bombay, Calcutta, Canton, Manila, and other Asian ports, put on this public display to commemorate their recent business adventures. Bentley recorded in his diary, "This day is the Annual Meeting of the East India Marine Society. . . . After business & before dinner they moved in procession, . . . Each of the brethren bore some Indian curiosity & the palanquin was borne by the negroes dressed nearly in the Indian manner. A person dressed in Chinese habits & mask passed in front. The crowd of spectators was great."[1]

The objects that the minister described demonstrate the global circulation of material culture in the Early Republic. Waiting in Asian harbors for trade opportunities, captains and crews swapped souvenirs that had literally circled the world. When they returned to their hometowns, they shared the objects they collected, both privately with acquaintances and publicly in museums and parades that were widely covered in the newspapers. These global artifacts provide insights into the broad intellectual pursuits of the Early Republic, including natural history, ethnography, and aesthetics. The objects also illuminate early trade relations and cultural perceptions between Asia and the new United States. When displayed back in the United States, artifacts helped construct and reinforce social hierarchies in American seaports; they also expressed America's arrival as a full participant in world commerce.

Bentley's reference to the material culture of India and China, carried through the streets of Salem, described a public celebration of the international

trade that had changed the identity and character of the town over the previous 20 years. In the colonial period, Salem had been a flourishing fishing and trading village, known mostly for its infamous witch trials. The British navigation acts of 1660 and 1663 allowed the North American colonies access to the lucrative Caribbean trade, and for 150 years Salem vessels voyaged regularly to other British colonial ports to exchange cod, corn, and timber for sugar, molasses, and occasionally slaves. After the American Revolution, however, the town's prosperity reached a new order of magnitude with the start of legal trade with China and the East Indies. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Salem was the sixth largest city in the new United States, boasting the highest per capita income in the country, derived from its fleet of more than 200 trading vessels. Though the China trade is best known, Salem's wealth derived more generally from the East Indies trade: Salem dominated the cotton trade with India and the pepper trade with Sumatra.[2]

With global commerce came an increased demand for geographical knowledge, and institutions developed in Salem to meet this need. In the colonial period, strong kinship and social networks were the primary conduits of global knowledge, augmented by fledgling libraries and fraternal groups. These associations became stronger in the Early Republic, as more institutional venues—such as libraries, retail establishments, and the museum—emerged to circulate ideas and information. In Salem, those who had firsthand global seafaring experience interacted with those who learned about the world through study. Exchanges of texts, images, and objects became the basis of deep fraternal bonding and played a role in solidifying the town's class hierarchies. An elite class developed, characterized and united by knowledge of the wider world, particularly Asia and the rest of the Pacific Basin.

In the colonial period, sea captains in every substantial port organized marine societies.[3] These charitable organizations provided assistance to disabled seamen and to those widowed and orphaned by the dangerous sea life. Founded in 1799, Salem's East India Marine Society was more select. Its membership was limited to sea captains and supercargoes (that is, the head traders) who had rounded either the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn to engage in Asian trade. Thus right from the outset the by-laws of the East India Marine Society defined the elite of Salem's elite. Because of this restriction, there were only 22 members at its founding in 1799. By 1800, however, the number neared 50, and by 1805 there were 100 members, indicative of the extent and global reach of Salem's trade.[4]

Part of the East India Marine Society's collecting activities were directed toward its goals of furthering navigation and providing its members with safety and a competitive edge in trade. The society collected nautical charts, which members could borrow as they prepared for voyages. It also collected unique and personal

information. Members of this fraternal organization were required from the beginning to present the logs of their voyages to the library committee upon their return. Starting in 1801, the society even provided blank journals for seafarers. Nathaniel Bowditch, author of the path-breaking *New American Practical Navigator*, was named the Inspector of Journals after he returned from his last Asian voyage in 1804. Bowditch arranged, analyzed, and bound the journals (which were sometimes illustrated with drawings) to allow members easier access to information on maneuvering harbors and conducting trade. In addition to firsthand information, the society's library offered for circulation among members a selection of published sea chronicles, particularly very expensive engraved imported volumes—including books illustrating the voyages of Captain Cook, La Pérouse, and Vancouver. In these ways the East India Marine Society became an important center for the circulation of global knowledge and visual imagery of distant lands.

The East India Marine Society was unique among marine societies because its members were expected to contribute "curiosities" they personally had collected to its cabinet.[5] Mariners had always collected mementos of their voyages. Before the establishment of museums in America, these objects circulated much as books did—through family and friendship networks. If marine societies collected artifacts, they did so in a haphazard manner. But the mandate of the new society included forming "a Museum of natural and artificial curiosities, particularly such as are to be found beyond the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn."[6] Salem's sea captains recognized both the intellectual and practical values of acquiring and displaying these items for members and the townspeople. The assembled objects embodied both the accessibility of the world and the diversity of members' experiences, and reinforced the captains' and traders' positions as men of status in Salem's hierarchical society.

The idea for a museum germinated in summer 1799.[7] Captain Jonathan Carnes seems to have been the driving force behind the idea of collecting objects for the society's museum. Carnes came from a seafaring family; his father had been a successful privateer during the Revolutionary War. In the late 1790s he pioneered the pepper trade with Sumatra, first in a series of secret voyages, then returning with full cargoes of over 150,000 pounds of pepper each in 1797, 1799, and 1801. Other merchants soon followed suit, trading directly at small ports on the north side of the island in order to avoid the mark-up expenses of Dutch middlemen.[8] Returning from his second voyage to Sumatra, Carnes donated the museum's first acquisitions: objects from the natural world, including various shells and an elephant's tooth, and cultural artifacts, including elaborate Malaysian gold boxes and a Sumatran pipe.[9]

Bentley wrote that the new East India Marine Society had decided "to make a cabinet" for such items and that he had helped the new society, which elected

1. *Ostrich Egg from the Cape of Good Hope.* 6 3/10 in. long. Peabody Essex Museum, (East India Marine Society 502), Gift of Captain Benjamin Carpenter. Photo © Peabody Essex Museum.

Benjamin Hodges as president, to revise its articles of incorporation. The minister was fully supportive of the enterprise, calling it a "liberal & important design."[10] Bentley, a naturalist as well as a theologian, used the term "liberal" in the Enlightenment sense of scientific inquiry. He and the Salem sea captains saw the value of collecting specimens as far more than entertainment; it was firsthand participation in the eighteenth-century quest to study and make available natural history.

Knowing the minister's deep interest in natural history, Reverend Bentley's seagoing parishioners often brought him exotica from their journeys. His diary mentions such gifts in 1788, after he had been settled at the East Church for nearly five years. Captain Elkins gave him a Chinese razor; Captain West brought him Chinese copper coins. Captain Benjamin Hodges, Bentley's close friend, presented him with some of the most intriguing items in his collection. In 1790 Hodges gave the minister "a Pike or Spear of Wood, with a Bow and two Arrows brought by the American Ship Columbia from Nootka Sound [in present-day British Columbia] to Canton, & Specimens of cloth from Sandwich Islands" [that is, present-day Hawaii]. Though Hodges had gone to China along the traditional Salem route of the eighteenth century—via the Cape of Good Hope and the Isle of France [now Mauritius], then across the Indian Ocean and on to China—the first artifacts he presented to his friend were items from the American side of the Pacific basin, where he had not traveled. From the same China trade season of 1790, Captain Henry Elkins also gave the minister Native American hooks and cloth from the Northwest coast along with French and Dutch coins and a "specimen of Chinese writing."[11] Thus the artifacts the captains brought back were truly global—from all around the world—and not simply evidence of where individuals had voyaged.

For Bentley, these objects were guides for learning about the physical world. Bentley is the Salem figure who comes closest to the ideal of collecting for the intensive study of natural history, pursued in America, for example, by Charles Willson Peale, who based much of the collecting and arrangement of his museum on the Linnaean system.[12] Salem ministers, professional men, and sea captains were well aware of efforts in Philadelphia to develop a philosophical society, to publish journals on the model of the *Royal Philosophical Transactions*, and to display objects to educate viewers about the natural world. Some Salem merchants and mariners even donated objects to Peale's museum and to the

American Philosophical Society's cabinet before the founding of their own. Bentley's worldview was challenged and transformed through his encyclopedic reading and intensive study of global artifacts. He concluded that knowledge of all parts of the globe—his idealistic goal—might prove impossible. And, trained in traditional Congregational theology, as early as 1788 he moved toward what he called a more "rational Christianity," saying he was "ready to receive truth upon proper evidence from whatever quarter it may come." He worried about doubting the Trinity and began a slow drift to what would eventually become Unitarianism.[13]

2. *Pagoda*, ca. 1800. China. Soapstone, nephrite, wood, brass, gold, and silk. Peabody Essex Museum, E9659 (East India Marine Society 173), Gift of Captain Nathaniel Ingersoll. Photo © Peabody Essex Museum.

Within two years of the museum's beginning, Reverend Bentley recorded in his diary that more than 185 articles were on display at the East India Society's meeting room. He wrote that at the museum he saw "images & paintings of Hindostan, China & Japan, with complete dresses in the Chinese fashion." These were intermingled with "various specimens of the Oyster shells of Sumatra. . . . The Albatross, birds of paradise, parake[e]ts, & several birds. . . . Some antiquities. . . A few specimens of stones, ores, &c. not arranged, petrefactions, & curiosities."[14]

In the early days, the members seem to have used the terms "cabinet" and "museum" interchangeably. Whatever they called it, it grew rapidly. From the 185 articles Bentley saw in 1801, the first catalogue published in 1821 listed 2,269 objects. The second catalogue of 1831 listed 4,299 objects. The contents of the collection mirrored the usual patterns of cabinets of curiosities (Figures 1, 2). There were natural curiosities such as ostrich eggs, stuffed penguins, and elephant tusks, and even hair shaved from an Indian Brahmin. And there were cultural curiosities such as ivory pagodas, Maori door lintels, Polynesian fans, and Native American masks.[15]

Some of the objects brought back to America may have been perceived as having value as fine art as well as curiosities. For instance, after his 1788–90 voyage to China, Captain Hodges gave Reverend Bentley one of the most significant Chinese sculptures now in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum (Figure 3). Bentley described "the Image of a Mandarin exceeding two feet in height, richly ornamented in the habit

3. *Figure of a Chinese Man*, ca. 1790. China. Unfired clay, paint, and steel. Peabody Essex Museum, E7096 (East India Marine Society 235), Presented by Captain Benjamin Hodges to Reverend William Bentley in 1790, Anonymous gift. Photo © Peabody Essex Museum.

of his order." This sculpture is unusual in that it has moving parts; it is a "nodder," in which a weight on a wire slides into the hollow clay body, triggering another wire to move the head and an arm as it descends. Bentley noted that the motion was not graceful—rather it evoked a realism that was, as he described it, "inspiring the idea of life." He had high praise for the craftsmanship of the textiles the figure wears, describing the red apron embroidered with a dragon and the beautiful blue of the gown. He also noted the sculptor's talent: "The countenance pleasant, the posture inclined," and the ease with which the hand holds a staff.[16] In his study of Chinese artists who worked for the export market, Carl Crossman noted that this is one of the earliest sculptures exported to the American market. There was, however, a strong tradition of clay Chinese portrait sculpture exported to Britain and the continent throughout the eighteenth century.[17] Bentley was certainly attuned to the contemporary discourses about sculpture as a fine art and may have perceived his gift as such.

What did global artifacts mean once they were brought home? For the collector, certainly, souvenirs enhanced personal memories. Objects also signaled their owners' success, for life at sea was grueling, and completion of a voyage constituted a recognized achievement for a mariner of any rank. For captains and traders, artifacts held another layer of significance as signs of essential scientific, practical, and commercial knowledge. Those who possessed and displayed these Asian curiosities were men of accomplishment who had led a successful voyage—and returned a good profit to their investors. Beyond symbols of successful trading voyages, these objects were signs of intellectual aspirations. As Daniel Finamore observed, "[T]he museum closely linked commerce with enlightenment philosophy" and "placed mariners not only in the role of merchants but, simultaneously, that of intellectuals."[18] Exotic curiosities were also signs of American achievement in commerce, and they reinforced an emerging national identity as former British colonials who were becoming significant players in the global economy.

Insights into the meanings that the collection held for society members can be discerned from the toasts proposed at each of their annual meetings. Toasts at fraternal

organizations during the Early Republic signaled far more than momentary sentiment in the midst of a social event. They were prepared and written out in advance by committee and often sent to the local newspaper to publish. They presented the elite perspective on important social, political, and intellectual currents of the day. From the very first, some of the toasts at the East India Marine Society dinners were dedicated to the collection. One 1804 toast, for example, commemorated: "A Cabinet. That every mariner may possess the history of the world." This toast clearly defines objects as a source of knowledge. And it gives history an expansive resonance, evoking natural history as well as political history. Another toast from the same year was to: "Natural history. May commerce never forget its obligations."[19] It suggests that beyond economic motives, the captains and merchants practiced learned and gentlemanly pursuits, such as geographical and scientific inquiry. At the elaborate dinners, toasts often linked multiple types of knowledge that are today considered more distinct, and they suggested this knowledge would bring practical mercantile benefits.

Three toasts from 1809 make clear that mariners—at least these New England Federalist mariners—saw free trade as an essential part of American national identity. Imagine a room filled with cigar smoke and men downing several glasses of brandy, rum, gin, and Madeira. After the standard toasts to George Washington and Christopher Columbus, and the American Navy, were the following:

To: "Commerce, it is our *birthright*; and ought to be as free as the winds which woft our ships."
To: "The cause of *Liberty* throughout the World."
To: "American enterprise. May it never be restrained by lawless power, or rival jealousy."[20]

Taken together, the toasts reveal this fraternal organization was bound together by useful specialized global knowledge. The collection not only reinforced the wonders of nature, it reinforced members' self-perception as men of knowledge, taste, civilization, leadership—and business acumen.

But what did the mariners think about their Asian trading partners? Their journals and logs and their letters home leave no doubt that they believed in their own cultural superiority. They saw themselves as recently released from the bondage of British colonialism that had controlled their mercantile exchanges, and, as we have seen, they believed mightily in the right to free trade. They were continually frustrated by the elaborate Chinese trading system, which confined outsiders to a small area of Canton and insisted that all commerce filter through designated trading posts called hongs. Language barriers were great, as was suspicion on both sides. In general, the American seamen saw the Chinese as dishonest, superstitious,

4. *Nusserwanjee Maneckjee Wadia*, ca. 1800. China or India. Oil on canvas, 39 × 29 in. Peabody Essex Museum, M245, Gift of John R. Dalling. Photo © Peabody Essex Museum.

cruel, and corrupt, as well as oppressed by the authoritarian rule of the emperor.[21] But they sailed to the other side of the world because they valued Chinese inventiveness and craftsmanship, particularly in the production of porcelain and silks—technologies that could not yet be replicated in Europe or America—and because they wanted tea.

The only way to break down such wariness and suspicion was to develop relationships among individuals. Mariners operated in contact zones between cultures, and global knowledge gave mariners the confidence and ability to operate in these zones.[22] In her book *Yankee India*, Susan Bean described how gifts between American and Asian merchants helped to develop friendly, reliable business relationships. Some of the objects they presented to their shore agents had deep American cultural resonance. As Partha Mitter has noted earlier in this volume, in 1801 a group of American merchants gave the prominent Calcutta merchant Ramdulal Dey a life-size copy by William Winstanley of Gilbert Stuart's iconic Lansdowne portrait of George Washington. No doubt this nationalistic gift was meant to reinforce their message to the Indian trader that their country had recently become independent from the British empire.[23]

The gifts exchanged between Salem captain George Nichols and Bombay (now Mumbai) merchant Nusserwanjee Maneckjee Wadia around 1800 were more personal and may be more typical. When Nusserwanjee learned that Nichols was engaged to be married upon his return, he helped him to select the highest quality fabric for his fiancée's wedding dress. The merchant then gave the captain an elegant camel's hair shawl for his future wife, and the captain reciprocated by giving the merchant a 20-volume illustrated set of William Mavor's *Voyages*, a fairly expensive collection of tales of historical sea expeditions that was popular in Salem. As Bean observed, "Gift exchanges like these built relationships in the contact zone, where expectations were imperfectly understood and legal constraints were treated pragmatically."[24]

In 1803 Nusserwanjee donated objects directly to the new museum in Salem. As a Parsi, a member of an ethnic and religious group in India descended from ancient migrations of Persian Zoroastrians, Nusserwanjee was a minority in a land of Hindus and Muslims.

Thus the merchant may have been especially sensitive to intercultural contacts. His gifts to the museum—shoes, robe, shawl, and turban that made up a "complete Parsee dress"—educated Americans about the ethnic complexities of India and specifics of his own group. The same year, the Salem captain John R. Dalling gave the museum an oil painting of Nusserwanjee, which became the basis for a sculpture of the Indian merchant that the East India Marine Society commissioned to display the clothing he had donated (Figure 4).[25] The painting suggests Nusserwanjee's role as an agent between two parties. An Indian-style carpet lies under his Western-style desk and chair. His pen and paper signal his involvement in the business of trade. Displayed back in Salem, such portraits reminded sea captains about their steadfast and trustworthy agents abroad and illustrated for the townspeople the captains' mastery of the complexities of global trade.

5. *Yamqua*, 1801. Head and hands carved by Samuel McIntire, painting attributed to Michele Felice Cornè, body constructed by Jonathan Bright. Wood, paint, human hair, moss, iron, and cotton duck, 72 × 20 × 20 in. Peabody Essex Museum, E7161, Gift of Captain Benjamin Hodges. Photo by Dennis Helmar © Peabody Essex Museum.

At the museum, Nusserwanjee shared a home with a life-size figure of Yamqua, a Chinese merchant, that Captain Benjamin Hodges gave as a gift to the museum in 1801 (Figure 5). Museum records are sketchy; they say Hodges donated "an original dress of Yamqua." The body was formed of iron and fabric by carpenter Jonathan Bright in Salem, and the head and hands carved in wood by Samuel McIntire and likely painted by Michele Felice Cornè.[26] Carl Crossman has suggested that McIntire worked from an original guide, perhaps a clay portrait that had broken, because the realism is readily apparent—right down to the small pox scars on the merchant's face.[27] Or McIntire may have worked from Hodges's description of the merchant.[28]

Visitors never failed to remark on the dramatic and authentic impression made by life-size sculptures of Asian merchants. These Asian merchants were the elite counterparts to the American traders. As such, they were presented as individuals, unlike the more generic representation of cultures in the society's cabinet. While they reminded sea captains of their trustworthy agents abroad, more importantly, they illustrated the complexities of global trade and acknowledged the Salem captains' ownership of privileged contacts and information.

International trade was the basis for the Salem's wealth in the Early Republic. Institutions such as libraries, fraternal organizations, and the museum arose to meet the deep

desire for global knowledge. Awareness of the global artifacts was widespread throughout the town; even those who did not venture into the East India Marine Society's museum saw the "curiosities" as they were carried throughout the streets of the city on the days of the society's annual meeting or they read descriptions of them in the newspapers. Ownership of objects from the South Seas, India, China, Indonesia, and other places signified possession of specialized knowledge, which was associated with elite status. So was the wearing of imported silks and cashmere shawls and the use of ivory fans and elaborate sets of Chinese porcelains, especially if they were personalized with monograms that reinforced their direct connections. Thus global artifacts contributed to and reinforced social hierarchies. And as physical embodiments of the new American international trade, global artifacts also symbolized America's new place in international commerce.

Notes

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1. William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts*. 4 vols. (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1962), quotation from entry for January 4,1804, 3:68. A palanquin is a seat carried on poles borne on the shoulders of servants; American and European traders in India frequently commented on its use by elites in India for transportation.

2. There are few modern histories of Salem; a good summary is National Park Service, *Maritime Salem in the Age of Sail* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1987). See also Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds., *Salem: Place, Myth, Memory* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004); James Duncan Phillips, *Salem in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1937); *Salem and the Indies: The Story of the Great Commercial Era of the City* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947); and *Pepper and Pirates. Adventures in the Sumatra Pepper Trade of Salem* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949).

3. Some of these organizations still exist, such as the Boston Marine Society (founded 1742), the Marine Society of the City of New York (founded 1770), the Portland Marine Society (founded 1796), and the Salem Marine Society (founded 1766, distinct from the East India Marine Society in Salem).

4. The most thorough and synthetic history of the East India Marine Society is Walter Muir Whitehill, *The East India Marine Society and the Peabody Museum of Salem: A Sesquicentennial History* (Salem, MA: Peabody Museum, 1949). More recent interpretive articles include Daniel Finamore, "Displaying the Sea and Defining America: Early Exhibitions at the Salem East India Marine Society," in the online *Journal for Maritime Research* (May 2002), www.jmr.nmm.ac.uk; and James M. Lindgren, "'That Every Mariner May Possess a History of the World': A Cabinet for the East India Marine Society of Salem." *New England Quarterly* 68 (June 1995): 179–205. doi:10.2307/366255.

5. Finamore, "Displaying the Sea and Defining America," makes this point.

6. This is the wording from the 1808 by-laws, which were reprinted in the museum's 1821 and 1831 catalogues. The 1799 by-laws simply state that the society may collect or accept donations of "Books, Papers, Charts, Curiosities, and other such things." Original documents are in the papers of the East India Marine Society (MH-88), Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum. Reprint of 1799 document in Whitehill, *The East India Marine Society,* 177–81.

7. The founding captains asked Bentley for his comments on their written articles of incorporation in August 1799; Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley,* entry for August 26, 1799, 2:316.

8. On the origins of the pepper trade with Sumatra see Phillips, *Salem and the Indies*, 92–100, and Phillips, *Pepper and Pirates*. Phillips credits Carnes with inspiring the East India Marine Society cabinet, but he did not return until October 1799, a few months after the society had been conceptualized.

9. Whitehill, *The East India Marine Society,* 34.

10. Bentley, *Diary*, entry for October 21, 1799, 2:321.

11. Bentley, *Diary*, entry for May 31, 1790, 174–75.

12. David R. Brigham, *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale's Museum and Its Audience* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), esp. 35, 36, 57–58, 113 on Linnaeus. See also Charles Coleman Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum: Charles Willson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 1980), esp. 15, 67, 106, 162 on Linnaeus, and 16–17, 36–37, 90, 206 on the influence of Comte de Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*.

13. Whitfield J. Bell Jr., "The Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society" in *A Cabinet of Curiosities: Five Episodes in the Evolution of American Museums* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 1–34. The American Philosophical Society (APS) was founded in 1742, suspended, and then revived in 1769. Bell comments that in the early years of the APS museum, objects were "merely accumulated; they were not collected." On Bentley's theology see J. Rixey Ruffin, *A Paradise of Reason: William Bentley and Enlightenment Christianity in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

14. Bentley, *Diary,* entry for August 13, 1801, 2:382.

15. At first, there seems to have been no attempt at arrangement. After 1837 the museum was arranged by function—for example, all cooking utensils, or hats, or weapons, placed together, no matter their country of origin. This organization effectively erased, in the public domain, the specific geographic specialties that the sea captains had worked so hard to attain. It romanticized exotica rather than educated about culture.

16. Bentley, *Diary*, entry for June 5, 1790, 1:175.

17. Carl L. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade* (Wappingers' Falls, NY: Antique Book Collectors' Club, 1991), 307–18.

18. Finamore, "Displaying the Sea and Defining America."

19. The 1804 toasts are reprinted in Whitehill, *The East India Marine Society*, 18–19.

20. The 1809 toasts are transcribed from the original document in the East India Marine Society papers (MH-88). A recent book that emphasizes the issue of federal-period free trade in the development of the American economy is James Fichter, *So Great a Proffit: How the East Indies Trade Transformed Anglo-America Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

21. Jessica Lanier, "The Post-Revolutionary Ceramics Trade in Salem, Massachusetts, 1783–1812" (M.A. thesis, Bard Graduate Center, 2004), 104–105; Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785–1882* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 18, 22–30.

22. Susan Bean and Mary Louise Pratt use this term. See Bean, *Yankee India* (Salem MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2001); and Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

23. Bean, *Yankee India,* 72, 74.

24. Ibid., 71–72. William Mavor, *Historical Account of the Most Celebrated Voyages, Travels, and Discoveries, from the Time of Columbus to the Present Period*, 25 vols. (London: Printed for E. Newbery, 1796–1801).

25. The Peabody Essex Museum formerly attributed this work to Spoilum, the most celebrated Cantonese portrait painter of the turn of the nineteenth century, perhaps following the discussion in Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade*, 52–53. The canvas, treatment of facial features, shading of the head, and light penumbra on the right side of the head suggest Spoilum, but certain details, such as the Indian pattern on the rug and the fact that Spoilum rarely painted full-length studies, raise questions about the Chinese attribution.

26. Dean T. Lahikanen, *Samuel McIntire: Carving an American Style* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2007), 83–85, 102.

27. Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade*, 320.

28. Lahikanen, *Samuel McIntire*, 83–85, 102.

Images of American Racial Stereotypes in Nineteenth-Century Japan

Nicole Fabricand-Person

In the mid-nineteenth century, after more than 200 years of isolation from the West, residents of Japan were officially introduced to America, a country with a unique set of artistic conventions for race. As the Japanese encountered Americans of European descent and their images of the American "Indian" and "Negro" in newspapers, magazines, dime novels, and even in scientifically sanctioned history and geography books, they became aware of the racial stratification that existed in the white Western world and were, to some extent, forced to self-reflexively evaluate their place within it.[1] This essay examines the exportation of U.S. racial stereotypes and their adoption in Japanese art and culture.

For the Japanese people, the reaction to first contact with Americans was predicated on earlier relationships with European nations. Encounters with the West in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had proven unsatisfactory, and in 1639 the Japanese government ordered the country's borders closed to guard against perceived threats of foreign aggression and challenges to the Tokugawa Shogun's rule. Europeans were expelled, and Japanese people traveling abroad were not allowed to return. The only Western foreigners permitted to stay and trade in Japan were the Dutch, who were confined to a small manmade island off the coast of Nagasaki, where their activity was strictly controlled. For more than two centuries the government severely limited Japan's exposure to the rest of the world.

This situation changed with the arrival of a fleet of American ships commanded by Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry in 1853. Although Japan initially resisted a relationship with America and the West, Perry succeeded

1. Utagawa Yoshifuji, *Americans Strolling About [Americajin yūkyō]*, 1861. Woodblock print, 14 15/16 × 9 11/16 in. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of the Daval Foundation, from the Collection of Ambassador and Mrs. William Leonhart.

in opening the country to trade with the United States, and eventually with other nations as well, when he returned in 1854 with the threat of force. Soon after treaties with the Western countries were signed, a foreign settlement was established within the port city of Yokohama.

Not surprisingly, the presence of exotic-looking foreigners in Japan, with their strange hairstyles, feathered hats, and unusual clothing, fueled an interest in images of the Westerners. Woodblock print publishers in the nearby capital city of Edo (renamed Tokyo in 1868) quickly capitalized on this fascination with the newcomers in the foreign settlement, issuing a new kind of woodblock print known as the "Yokohama picture" (*yokohama-e*). These prints were mass-produced for a general audience that could easily afford them and were sold by the thousands between 1859 and 1862, when their popularity began to wane.[2] Some artists appear to have traveled to Yokohama from Edo to "accurately" capture the appearances of their subjects. Access to the Westerners in these early years of the small Yokohama foreign settlement was difficult, however. The foreigners' residences were segregated from those of Japanese merchants, and their travel outside the boundaries of Yokohama was restricted. Most artists, therefore, drew their inspiration from newspapers and magazines that trickled into Japan through the foreign settlement.[3]

The Western inhabitants of Yokohama—Dutch, French, Russian, English, and American—were all represented in these prints.[4] To the Japanese artists who designed them, however, these strangers all looked much the same. Other than an occasional costume flourish, the foreigners were distinguishable only by the accompanying

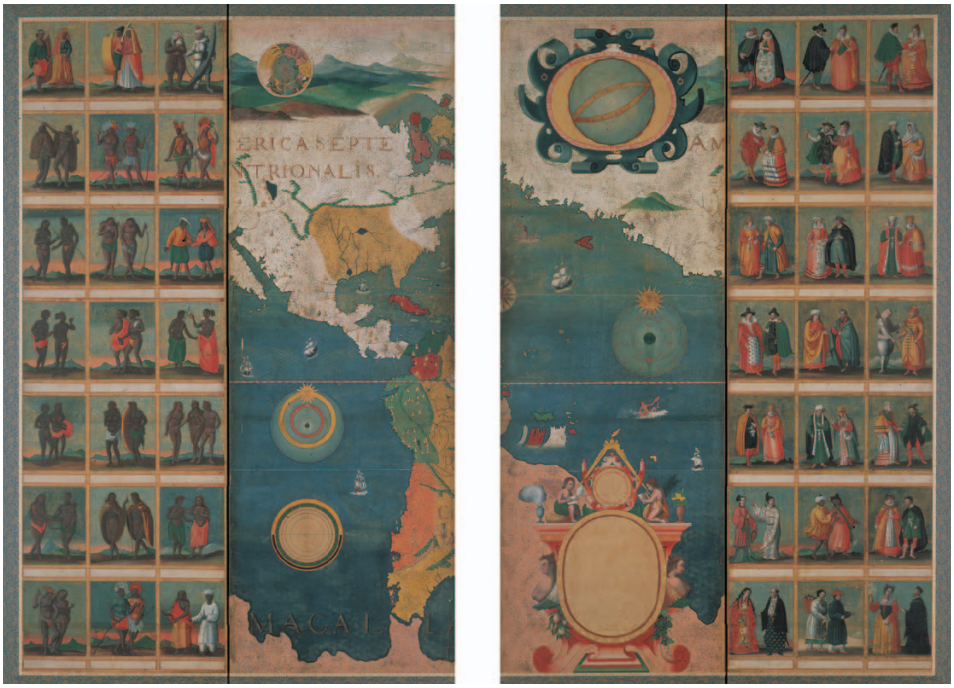
text or by a printed inscription within the composition that noted their nationalities. The emphasis was on the exoticism of the subject matter as a whole; specific cultural differences were secondary.

Americans—fair-skinned people of European descent—were a popular subject among the pictures of foreigners in Yokohama (Figure 1). The definition of "American," however, was a complicated one. Unlike the homogeneous depictions of the peoples of Holland, Russia, France, and England seen in foreign publications, the image of the white Euro-American was but one of the representations of Americans that was coming into the Japanese consciousness. The books, newspapers, and magazines that were reaching Japan through the foreign settlement depicted two other kinds of American people: Indians and Negroes. These "others" came to be known to the Japanese primarily through the filter of stories and illustrations conceived by the white Western world—accounts and pictures that provided a subtext defining nonwhites as less than human. The fact that this message was clearly received is evident in the nineteenth-century Japanese labeling of images of Native Americans and other non-white Americans with terms like *Amerika no dojin* ("American savages") and *Amerika no bo* ("American 'boy'") in reference to adult males.[5]

Americans: The Early Years

White Americans of European descent were not the first Americans to be introduced to Japan through images. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Dutch traders had brought maps that included quasi-scientific illustrations of the "people of different nations" and featured (correctly) images of Indians as the representative culture of America.[6] These maps were widely disseminated, and it was through them that Dutch cartographers established global conventions for portraying the peoples of different nations—people with whom the Japanese had no experience and about whom they had no visual knowledge. These models were copied and codified by Japanese artists in the early seventeenth century in large paintings made for a wealthy military class interested in exotic themes.[7]

A celebrated example of this type of painting is a pair of eight-panel folding screens entitled *Bankoku ezu: Sekai zu/Nijūhachi toshi zu* (*Pictorial Map of All Countries: Map of the World and Twenty-eight Cities*) in the Imperial Household Collection in Tokyo. Almost six feet high and over 12 feet wide (each), this imposing set of screens is painted in ink and color on paper. On the right screen the anonymous artist has depicted 28 Western cities and a large map of Portugal derived from maps by the Dutch mapmakers Willem and Joan Blaeu. Above the cities, eight rulers of the Christian and Muslim worlds face off in pairs.[8] The left screen features a map of the world flanked on either side by 42 pairs of costumed



2. *Bankoku ezu: Sekai zu (Map of the World and Twenty-eight Famous Cities)*, Momoyama to Edo period, 17th century. Details from a pair of eight-panel screens, each screen: 70 5/16 × 191 1/2 in. The Museum of the Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shōzōkan, Tokyo.

figures representing the peoples of the world (Figure 2). These people are organized following Dutch models, what some scholars have called the "conquerors on the right and conquered on the left." While care seems to have been taken to distinguish the different nationalities and to present them in an unbiased, almost anthropological way, there is no denying that the painting presents an iconography of civilized versus uncivilized—with the grouping of white and light-skinned on the right and nonwhite on the left, the richly clothed on the right and the partially clothed on the left, the weapon as accoutrement on the right and weapon as useful tool on the left.[9]

Through these Dutch-inspired paintings of the people of the world we get a sense that, for the first time, the Japanese had begun to think self-reflexively about their place in the global context. In most of the works the artists have placed the pair of Japanese representatives at the bottom of the "light-skinned" side of the maps, suggesting that they saw themselves as part of the "civilized world." In this painting the artist has gone a step further to give the Japanese female figure an atypical, long and curly hairstyle, making her appear more like a Renaissance woman than a Japanese lady.[10] In the nineteenth century, after the long break in regular contact with the West, the same hierarchy seen in these paintings would once again be clearly articulated to the Japanese—this time by Americans.

Images of American Indians

Despite the self-imposed isolation begun in 1639, by the early eighteenth century the Shogunate had relaxed some of the laws regarding contact with the Dutch. Western books could be purchased and translated. *Rangaku* or "Dutch learning" became an essential source of information on science and technology, and, with the extremely high literacy rate in Japan, thousands of copies of translated Dutch volumes were published and sold. Dutch cartography, perpetuating the visual images of the "people of the world," was once again studied as interest in the West grew.[11] Generally speaking though, the image of the American Indian—placed among the many "uncivilized" peoples on these maps—was rather benign. Native Americans, usually with the label *Amerika* or "people of America" (*Amerika no jin*) were depicted as one group of the many scantily clad, brown-skinned people wearing feathered headdresses that inhabited the Americas.[12] It was not until the nineteenth century and interaction with the United States that the image of the American Indian began to change from a rather impersonal anthropological representation of earlier periods into something more savage and threatening.

The relationship between Native Americans and white Americans in the United States was constantly changing during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and, consequently, images of the American Indian that came to Japan took a variety of forms. This was reflected in contemporary newspapers such as *Harper's Weekly* that featured everything from articles on the so-called noble savage—with culturally edifying engravings of what was perceived to be controlled Indian life on the plains—to advertisements and cartoons of savages wielding knives. The Indian as a sexually threatening savage was a popular literary theme in the United States, and a staple in luridly illustrated publications coming to Japan like *Beadle's Dime Novels.*[13] This was the image that ultimately came to represent the American Indian in the minds of the Japanese.

The greatest influence on this choice of how the Indian would be both perceived and represented in Japan seems to have been the prolific writings of the renowned scholar Fukuzawa Yukichi, who not only made two trips to the United States, but was a leading figure in a zealous attempt by a new imperial Japanese government (which came to power in 1868) to undertake the modernization of Japan. This was a complex project that involved the seemingly contradictory embrace of Western culture and the self-conscious revival of old court rituals.[14]

Woodblock prints, a popular and influential form of media in nineteenth-century Japan, capitalized on this imperially mandated modernization effort. Pictures showing technological innovations like the steam train, silk-reeling machines, and portraits of the emperor and his family wearing modern Western dress ultimately

became a means of visually educating the public to move toward what was referred to at the time as *bunmei kaika* or "civilization and enlightenment." Fukuzawa's writings were another means of educating the Japanese people. His ideas were not based as much on his personal experience in the West, however, as they were on information from illustrated American geography books such as Samuel Augustus Mitchell's *A System of Modern Geography*, which he translated and interpreted for Japanese audiences. It was Mitchell—and therefore Fukuzawa's—theory that the people of the world fell into general categories: the civilized, the semi-civilized, and the uncivilized.[15] Not surprisingly, Europeans and Americans of European descent were placed in the "civilized" category. Native Americans and dark-skinned Americans of African descent were placed in the "uncivilized" category. The Japanese people, and other Asians, fell into the "semi-civilized" category. Undaunted by this designation, Fukuzawa wrote that, with this knowledge that they fell between "civilized" and "uncivilized," the people of Japan—in order to become modern—should strive to become civilized like the (white) peoples of Europe and America, hence providing the rationale for Westernization in the guise of modernization.[16] In the chapter entitled "Western Civilization as Our Goal" in the 1875 text *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* ("Outline for a Theory of Civilization"), for example, he states:

> *When we are talking about civilization in the world today, the nations of Europe and the United States of America are the most highly civilized, while the Asian countries such as Turkey, China, and Japan, may be called semi-developed countries, and Africa and Australia are to be counted as still primitive lands. . . . [T]he designations "civilized," "semi-developed," and "primitive" have been universally accepted by people all over the globe.*

"[T]he attainment of modern civilization is of the greatest importance," he later adds. " . . .We have only now reached the stage where true progress can be envisioned."[17]

Images played a powerful role in this propaganda, in part because Fukuzawa was also indirectly involved in another part of the modernization effort: the transformation of the Japanese educational system. In 1872 new textbooks were required, and Fukuzawa's illustrated *Sekai kunizukushi* ("Nations of the World"), an abridged translation and adaptation of several geography and history books published in the United States, became an officially mandated textbook for Japanese schools. First published in 1869 as a text for both adults and children, it was reprinted several times and sold over a million copies. *Sekai kunizukushi* greatly influenced how Japanese people, from childhood, viewed the Western world and the permutations of "civilization."[18] Its contents consequently shaped the Japanese conception of

3. "*Savages of America Beating European People to Death.*" Woodblock print, 3 ¼ × 4 ¾ in. From Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Sekai kunizukushi [Nations of the World]* (ca. 1868–71 reprinting). Collection of the author.

the American Indian. In *Sekai kunizukushi* Fukuzawa describes the discovery of the Indians (*injiyan*) by Christopher Columbus, their life on the plains, and their dwindling numbers. He also includes an illustration (Figure 3) of Native Americans, with the caption, written within the frame, explaining: "Savages of America Beating European People to Death." This was an image drawn from the American geography and history books he used as his source material—one that was sociologically and scientifically sanctioned by the Western authors he held in such high regard.[19] Variations of images on this theme appear in countless American books in the nineteenth century. Despite Fukuzawa's belief in their authenticity, however, the authors of these history and geography texts were not traveling across America to sketch true-to-life depictions of native peoples. They too were often drawing from an earlier visual source—a powerful image found in the first American history painting to be accepted by the Paris Salon: the 1804 painting of *The Murder of Jane McCrea* by the American artist John Vanderlyn (Figure 4). Although the painting did not create the initial excitement the artist had hoped for in Paris, it indirectly began the codification of the image of the American Indian that would, in a variety of permutations, transcend its time and place. It was a pictorial convention so pervasive that it was the model on which many illustrated articles, books, cartoons, advertisements, and dime novel covers were derived throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[20]

4. John Vanderlyn, *The Murder of Jane McCrea*, 1804. Oil on canvas, 32 1/2 × 26 1/2 in. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT, Purchased by Subscription. Photo, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art/Art Resource, New York.

5. Adachi Ginkō, *The Strange Tale of the Castaways: A Western Kabuki [Hyōryu kidan seiyō kabuki]: The Desert Plains of America*, 1879. Woodblock print, 14 3/16 × 9 5/8 in. Princeton University Art Museum, Museum purchase, Anne van Biema Collection Fund. Photo by Bruce White.

Vanderlyn's painting depicts a young American woman being scalped by savage Indians in the employ of the British army during the Revolutionary War. It related a story based on actual events that took place in 1777 but continued to capture the imagination of the American public for more than a hundred years. The subject was engraved, painted, and lithographed by artists as popular as Currier & Ives well into the early twentieth century, with most versions closely adhering to the Vanderlyn prototype.[21] Fukuzawa derived his image of the American Indian from illustrations like these, heavily influenced by the convention established by Vanderlyn.

That Fukuzawa's representation of the American Indian became part of the Japanese consciousness is clearly seen in an 1879 woodblock print by the artist Adachi Ginkō and in the kabuki play on which that print was based (Figure 5).[22] The print is an illustration of the play *The Strange Tale of the Castaways: A Western Kabuki*, produced in 1879 by the celebrated theatre owner Morita Kan'ya and playwright Kawatake Mokuami. Fresh from a highly acclaimed performance of a play in honor of and attended by General Ulysses S. Grant two months earlier, they hoped to capitalize on the publicity and on their celebrity by writing and bringing to the stage a play about Japanese people traveling

through America and Europe. In this illustration of the beginning of Act II, Adachi Ginkō has depicted the dangerous desert plains of America. There has been a train crash, which has left these young Japanese travelers in Western dress victim to the sexual and barbarous nature of the bright red, barefoot, and feather-adorned American savages (as they are described in the yellow cartouches within the composition) who loom over them. It is clear in the positioning of the figures—especially the standing Indian wielding the club—and the landscape with a large tree and lush grass in the background that the ultimate model for this woodblock print was Vanderlyn's painting of *The Murder of Jane McCrea.* In its own context it recaptures the drama of the earlier work, and we sense the terror that Japanese audiences must have felt as they viewed such an image. Copied in the name of authenticity from American prototypes, the depiction of the red savage wielding a weapon became the accepted image of the American Indian in nineteenth-century Japan.

6. Adachi Ginkō, *The Strange Tale of the Castaways: A Western Kabuki [Hyōryu kidan seiyō kabuki]: Theatrical Scene with Foreigners*, 1879. Woodblock print, 14¼ × 9½ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Bequest of William S. Lieberman. Photo © Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, New York.

Images of the American Negro

Another of Adachi Ginkō's woodblock prints illustrating *The Strange Tale of the Castaways* hints at the images that were being cultivated in Japan of the third type of American coming into the national consciousness: the American Negro (Figure 6).

Producer Morita Kan'ya had the revolutionary idea of ending his production with a "play within a play" for which he would hire real Western musicians to perform for both the characters in the story and the kabuki audience watching the performance. He brought in a troupe of English and American performers touring Asia at the time who, among other things, sang contemporary operettas, played the

violin, and performed the Highland fling. As we can see in this print, there was also a comic number based on the American minstrel show staple Brudder Bones.

As Vanderlyn's representation of the Indian as a savage killer became the convention for portraying the American Indian, so too did this minstrel figure portrayed with wooly hair, a dull gray-colored face, and exaggerated, almost ape-like features become one of the conventions for portraying the American Negro in nineteenth-century Japan. The black-faced minstrel was an image exported from the United States in a variety of media, and it is clear from the positioning of the figure with his arms and legs spread wide that Adachi Ginkō is working from a standardized image for this character of Brudder Bones.[23]

The minstrel show had been known to the Japanese as early as 1854 through paintings of the one performed following a large banquet given by Perry for Japanese guests after his second arrival in Japan.[24] It was performed by some of his crew members, who blacked-up their faces with burnt cork to perform a number of songs, and is recorded as having delighted the Japanese audience.[25]

Black people (Africans) and images of black people were not new to Japan in the mid-nineteenth century. They too had appeared on Dutch maps and Japanese interpretations of these maps in the "uncivilized" category. Yet contemporary records suggest that there was a certain reverence for the Africans who came to Japan in the late sixteenth century as both crewmen and slaves of European traders. Many Japanese people thought their dark skin indicated that they were from India, the land of Buddha's birth, and they came from miles around to see them. This interest is evidenced in early-seventeenth-century paintings of the port of Nagasaki, showing Portuguese traders and clergy members with their Javanese and African slaves. In these works there is only a slight difference in appearance between the slaves and their masters. The skin and hair color is not the same, and the slaves are barefoot; otherwise there is little differentiation in their features and form—they were all strange and exotic foreigners. They were—and this was what was important at the time—not Japanese. Gradually, however, the subhuman treatment of these African slaves by the white Europeans with whom the Japanese identified caused them to feel that they also should despise them and see them as inferior.

In the Yokohama prints made in the early 1860s artists adopted different approaches in portraying dark-skinned people. Works by artists like Utagawa Sadahide, who is believed to have traveled to the foreign settlement to study his subjects, reveal an interpretation similar to the early-seventeenth-century paintings of the Portuguese and their slaves at Nagasaki; beyond skin color, there is little difference in their appearance. In a woodblock print of a salesroom of a foreign mercantile firm in Yokohama, for example, we see a woman who is described in a cartouche as

a "black laundress."[26] Except for the grayish coloring of her skin, however, she looks just like the white women in the room. It is interesting, though, that she is the only woman identified by a cartouche. Perhaps it is because she is so similar in appearance to the other women that the artist felt she had to be labeled as different. This sensitive approach to the subject contrasts with the treatment of black American men we see in Yokohama prints.

7. Ichiryūsai Yoshitoyo, *American Black Men [Amerika kuronbō]*, 1860. Woodblock print, 14 5/16 × 9 5/8 in. Harvard Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Bequest of William S. Lieberman. Photo, Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

In a Yokohama print by the artist Ichiryusai Yoshitoyo, for example, we see another type of depiction of the American Negro. These men are not performers, conforming to the conventions of the minstrel, but sailors who came to Japan on merchant ships as both slaves and free men. They are dark-skinned, half-naked, and barefoot and, despite being served food and drink by a woman (who appears to be white), they are the quintessential image of the definition of "uncivilized" in appearance (Figure 7). The title of the print in the upper right corner telling us that these are *Amerika kuronbō* (American black "boys"/inferiors) informs these images. It does not contain the word *jin* or "person," the term used for depictions of white European and American men and women in Yokohama prints, but the distinctively different ending *bo*.

Like the representation of the minstrel, the model for these figures appears to be the visual documentation of Perry and his crew. There are two images of Negro sailors in the earlier scrolls. Both have naked torsos with the same defined muscles of the men seen in the woodblock print made about six years later. They have baggy short pants and scarves which are held or hung around their necks. It is interesting to

note that in the two watercolor paintings of Perry's trip and this Yokohama print, the clothing, the scarves, and the definition of their nude muscular bodies all have an uncanny resemblance to paintings and sculptures of Buddhist demons turned guardians who are threatening in their fierce protection of Buddhist law. The appropriation of this form in both the 1854 paintings and in this 1860 print further emphasized the "uncivilized," possibly hidden demonic nature of the American Negro, known to the majority of the nineteenth-century Japanese population only through pictures like these. This too was a subtle message to the Japanese audience of the racial stratification that existed in the West.

Relatively speaking, there are few images of Native Americans and Americans of African descent in Japanese art of the nineteenth century, and this helped to solidify a singular impression of these "other Americans." It is important, however, to acknowledge these works that were derived from exported American models, because they created a negative view of the Indian and Negro that existed well into the twentieth century. As pictures of the Japanese themselves began to trickle into Japan through the foreign settlement at Yokohama—images often less than flattering with exaggerated features and dark skin—the depictions of Indians and Negroes also helped them to consider their own place in the global community as defined by white America.

Notes

1. The terms "Indian" and "Negro" are used in this essay to reflect nineteenth-century American parlance.

2. For a detailed examination and illustrations of Yokohama prints, see Ann Yonemura, *Yokohama: Prints from Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery/Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990).

3. Ibid., 82, and Julia Meech-Pekarik, *The World of the Meiji Print: Impressions of a New Civilization* (New York: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1986), 17–20.

4. See Yonemura, *Yokohama,* especially fig. 8, and catalogue entries 21–32 and 34–39.

5. The word *dojin* has, over the course of Japanese history, ranged in meaning from "savage" to "indigenous person." By the beginning of the Meiji period in 1868, however, it was used as a derogatory term. See David Howell, *Geographies of Identity in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

6. See, for example, Willem Janszoon Blaeu, *Nova Orbis Terrarum Geographica* (1607) and Joan Blaeu, *Nova et Accurata Torius Terrarium Orbis Tabula* (1646), in *Japan Envisions the West: 16th–19th Century Japanese Art from Kobe City Museum,* ed. Yukiko Shirahara (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2007), figs. 4, 9.

7. Examples of these paintings can be found in Yoshiaki Shimizu, *Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1988), and Money L. Hickman, *Japan's Golden Age: Momoyama* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996). See also Ann Yonemura, et al., *Twelve Centuries of Japanese Art from the Imperial Collections* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1997), 102–05.

8. The illustrations of these cities are mostly derived from Willem Blaeu's 1607 map, although the view of Rome is believed to have been modeled after *Vita Beati patris Ignatii Loyolae* (1610). Shimizu, *Japan: The Shaping of Daimyo Culture*, 181. The figures are identified as the rulers of Persia, Abyssinia, Tartary, Moscow, France, Spain, Turkey, and the Holy Roman Empire.

9. For an interesting exploration of this categorization, see Ronald Toby, "The 'Indianness' of Iberia and Changing Japanese Iconographies of Other," in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era,* ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 323–54.

10. Ibid.

11. By the mid-eighteenth century, versions of earlier maps with their (labeled) depictions of peoples of foreign lands were published for the general public in great quantities. See, for example: *Bankoku sozu* (Kyoto: Hayashi Jizaemon, 1671). Dictionaries and family encyclopedias also included these same maps with the labeled foreigners following on subsequent pages. See, for instance *Daifuku setsuyoshu daizo hokan* (Kyoto: Umemura Ichibei, 1761). On the influence of the Dutch on art of this period, see Calvin French, *Through Closed Doors: Western Influence on Japanese Art 1639–1853* (Rochester, MI.: Meadow Brook Art Gallery, 1977) and *Shiba Kōkan: Artist, Innovator, and Pioneer in the Westernization of Japan* (New York: Weatherhill, 1974).

12. Mexican and South American Indian cultures were also included as part of this group.

13. On the appearance and influence of dime novels, see Jonathan E. Zwicker, *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination: Melodrama, The Novel, and the Social Imaginary in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 210–13. The impact of the dime novel on Japanese literature (particularly drama) of the early Meiji period is discussed in J. Scott Miller, *Adaptations of Western Literature in Meiji Japan* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). See also Christopher Castiglia, *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). Albert Johannsen, *The House of Beadle and Adams and its Dime and Nickel Novels: The Story of a Vanished Literature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950); for an example of a cover illustration of a sexually aggressive Indian, see vol. 1, fig. 54.

14. Founder of Keio University and appearing today on Japan's 10,000-yen banknote, Fukuzawa made his trips to America in 1860 and 1867. In accordance with Japanese custom, the surname precedes the given name.

15. Samuel Augustus Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography* (Philadelphia: E. H. Butler & Company), 1870 (editions of this text had been published since 1839). Fukuzawa translated Mitchell's description of stages of enlightenment in his 1872 *Sekai Kunizukushi*; see Keio Gijuku, ed., *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshu*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1959), 663–64. Mitchell originally divided the world into five stages, with two categories of uncivilized (savage, barbarous) and two categories of civilized (civilized, enlightened), and one category that bridged stages (half-civilized); Fukuzawa conflated the groups.

16. Fukuzawa describes the Japanese as being half-civilized in *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* ("Outline of a Theory of Civilization"), 1875, in Keio Gijuku, ed., *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshu*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1959). Fukuzawa's original woodblock-printed books have been scanned by Keio University and can be accessed at http://project.lib.keio.ac.jp/dg_kul/index.html.

17. David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst III, trans., *Yukichi Fukuzawa: An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 17–18. *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* (http://project.lib.keio.ac.jp/dg_kul/index.html), 43–44, 48–49.

18. In his article, "Fukuzawa Yukichi cho *Sekai kunizukushi* ni kansuru ichikenkyū: shoshigakuteki chōsa," Minamoto Shōkyū posits that the images in this text had an influence on the way the Japanese people viewed the world from the Meiji period onward. See *Kūkan, shakai, chiri shisō*, no. 2 (1997): 2–18.

19. In *Sekai kunizukushi*, Fukuzawa explains to the reader that the text is a translation derived from a compilation of geography and history books; *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1959), 585. From the text he translated and the images he copied, we can specifically cite Mitchell's *System of Modern Geography* and Sarah Sophie Cornell's *Cornell's High School Geography* as two of his sources. The many texts featuring a variation of this image include Robert Sears, *The Pictorial History of the American Revolution.* (Boston: Reading and Co.,1846), fig. 113; John Warner Barber, *Incidents in American History* (New York: Geo. F. Cooledge & Brothers, 1847), 145; and Samuel Goodrich, *Pictorial History of America* (Hartford, CT: House & Brown, 1853).

20. On this painting's influence on nineteenth-century American art, see Samuel Y. Edgerton Jr., "The Murder of Jane McCrea: The Tragedy of an American Tableau d'Histoire," *Art Bulletin* 47, no. 4 (December 1965). doi:10.2307/3048306.

21. Currier & Ives produced a hand-painted color lithograph entitled *Murder of Miss Jane McCrea, A.D. 1777* in 1846; see *Currier & Ives: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Detroit: Gale Research, ca. 1983), no. 4638.

22. On this play and the woodblock prints associated with it, see Nicole Fabricand-Person, "From the Wild West to the Far East: The Imagining of America in a Nineteenth-Century Japanese Woodblock Print," *The Record, Journal of the Princeton University Art Museum,* 2009.

23. For early minstrel images, see Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). On Brudder Bones, see the cover for *The Celebrated Negro Melodies, as Sung by the Virginia Minstrels* (published in Boston in 1843) in Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), fig. 40, 127.

24. At least two similar water color-painted illustrations of this minstrel show exist, likely based on sketches done by artists sent to record the event by the Emperor and Shogun. The first version is assembled paintings mounted on a folding screen in *Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensan-jo* (Tokyo University Historiographical Institute); an illustration of this work appears on the cover of *American Heritage* 29, no. 3 (April-May 1978). The second painting, in the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, VA, is pictured in *American Heritage* 9, no. 3 (April 1958): 21.

25. See Victor Fell Yellin, "Mrs. Belmont, Matthew Perry, and the 'Japanese Minstrels'" *American Music* 14, no. 3 (Autumn, 1996): 257–75. A contemporary account appears in Frederic Trautmann, trans., *With Perry to Japan: A Memoir by William Heine* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990): 154–55, 182, 212–13, note 5.

26. This 1861 woodblock print appears in Yonemura, *Yokohama*, cat. entry 14.

"A Semi-Chinese Picture"

Hubert Vos and the Empress Dowager of China

Virginia Anderson

In June 1905, the artist Hubert Vos entered the imperial palace in Beijing to paint the portrait of the notorious empress dowager of China, Cixi (1835–1908). In letters to his family, he described her theatrical arrival at their first meeting: first came two eunuchs bearing fans, then a dozen attendant eunuchs, followed at last by the empress herself, carried in a golden chair at shoulder height by eight more eunuchs. An awestruck Vos called her the "Goddess of four hundred million people."[1]

Vos, an academic realist painter of society portraits and ethnographic studies—and something of an entrepreneur—had been summoned by the imperial court from his studio in New York City to paint the 70-year-old empress dowager. The empress, who ruled China from 1861 until her death 47 years later, was for both Westerners and the Chinese a mysterious and controversial figure. During her lifetime, she was castigated by her critics as a manipulative and profligate ruler, but equally defended by her admirers as an educated, talented woman who rose above the constraints of her cloistered life to fight for the integrity of her empire.

From his encounter with the empress dowager, Vos created two remarkably curious paintings. One, the full-length commissioned portrait now in the collection of the Summer Palace, Beijing, is an idealized, flattened, symmetrical rendering of the empress as she would have appeared at about 30 years old (less than half her actual age), surrounded by ceremonial décor (Figure 1). Vos kept for himself a second, three-quarter-length portrait, now in the collection of the Harvard Art Museums (Figure 2). This painting is closer in technique to his usual European academic style, but, like the Summer Palace version, depicts the

1. Hubert Vos, *H. I. M. The Empress Dowager of China, Cixi*, 1905. Oil on canvas, 92 × 54 in. Summer Palace, Beijing. Courtesy Arte et Cetera.

2. Hubert Vos, *H. I. M. The Empress Dowager of China, Cixi*, 1905–6. Oil on canvas, 66 3/4 × 48 11/16 in. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest of Grenville L. Winthrop. Photo by Katya Kallsen © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

seated empress in a boldly frontal pose. Both portraits were hybrids of Vos's Western academic realism and the traditionally codified forms of Chinese imperial portraiture. Both functioned as forms of propaganda, for artist and subject, but in very different cultural contexts: the insular imperial Chinese court and the turn-of-the-century Western art salon. Produced by an adaptable artist and his formidable subject during a pivotal historical moment, the two portraits destabilize conventional dichotomies of East versus West, the artist's gaze versus the subject's passivity, realism versus idealism, and tradition versus modernity.

Born in Maastricht, Holland, Vos (1855–1935) studied painting at the Royal Academy of Brussels, continuing his training in Rome and Paris. He began his career as a social realist, painting interiors and portraits from almshouses, asylums, and hospitals in Brussels and London. During the 1880s, he exhibited widely and received numerous medals from international salons. Moving his studio to London in 1887, Vos continued some of his social realist work, but at this point the focus of his painting shifted to society portraiture, a more lucrative practice that sustained him for the remainder of his long career. Portraits such as his 1891 painting of

the 11-year-old Queen Wilhelmina of Holland demonstrate the artist's sensitivity to both the appearance and the psychological tenor of his subjects.[2]

Peripatetic and energetic, Vos was delighted when the Dutch government appointed him the deputy commissioner for Holland to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.[3] Vos's experience at the fair shaped his life in significant ways. First, he fell in love with America and decided to make it his home, opening studios in New York City and Newport, Rhode Island. In 1897, having divorced his wife and left her and their two children in Europe, he married Eleanor Kaikilani Graham, a member of the Hawaiian royal family and herself a divorcée.[4] His full-length portrait depicts her as a vivacious, elegant woman in a green gown, her hands gathering the folds of a velvet cape around her body (Figure 3).

3. Hubert Vos, *Eleanor Kaikilani Coney Graham Vos*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 86¼ × 41¾ in. Kaua'i Historical Society.

In addition, Vos became fascinated by the myriad ethnological displays at the Chicago exposition, and his interest in portraiture burgeoned with this exposure. He decided to capture the "native types" of the world with his brush:

> *It was during the World's Fair in Chicago, where the officials had brought together the greatest collection of the different people of the Globe ever reunited in one spot at a tremendous expense, that I began to study the works I could get hold of on Ethnology and was shocked to see what poor specimens the principal authors had, to illustrate their very superior works. I thought it might be possible to establish a type of beauty of the different original aboriginal races before they became too much mixed or extinct and soon got to work.*[5]

This ethnographic project, supported by portrait commissions, was the focus of Vos's art, on and off, for the next six years. To begin with, in 1897 he spent eight months on a reservation in Fort Totten, North Dakota, painting Native Americans. He then traveled westward, often accompanied by his wife, to Hawaii, Indonesia,

Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and China. Echoing his earlier professional practices of painting asylum residents and society belles, Vos seems to have selected his ethnological subjects from two ends of the economic spectrum. On one hand, he portrayed the working-class people he encountered, including a Hawaiian musician, a Tibetan lama, and several Indian soldiers stationed in Hong Kong. On the other hand, he frequently painted the nobility to whom his society connections gave him access, as with his portraits of the emperor of Korea and Javanese royalty.[6]

He concluded his travels with a trip to China in 1899, a few months before the Boxer Rebellion began. Vos noted the anti-foreign tensions he experienced in certain regions. As before, he selected a variety of subjects, including an anonymous young woman of Fuzhou and a portrait of a young Manchu man, as well as Yuan Shi-Kai (1859–1916), a viceroy who would later briefly become the first president of China, and Prince Qing (1836–1918), a senior member at court and a relative by marriage to the empress dowager. During this visit, Vos sought permission to paint the empress dowager and her nephew, the Guangxu emperor, but he was unsuccessful.[7]

Vos's project resulted in about 40 paintings, which were exhibited at the Union League Club in New York and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, as well as at the Paris International Exposition of 1900.[8] Most of these compositions were bust or half-length portraits that feature their subjects in a lively manner, with attention to detail in the particularities of the face, clothing, and accessories.

One reviewer concluded, "Mr. Vos has found nothing to prove that racial types are disappearing, and that a world type is being 'crystallized.'" Multiple critics did, however, observe resemblances between the "racial types," with Charles de Kay, for example, noting that the Hawaiian musician could pass for a Provençal, the Javanese prince for a Basque. Mused de Kay, "We are constantly haunted with a vain imagining that Europeans and Americans are possessed of a noble type . . . but are we? . . . Why not confess at once that the world is smaller and the mixture of human races is more ancient than our race vanities have permitted us to believe?"[9] In part, Vos's artistic style and his approach to his subject matter contributed to this kind of analysis. Eschewing impressionism for academic realism, he kept his painting style traditional and conservative. A 1901 critic described his portraits as "delicate, smooth, and accomplished."[10] In keeping with his American and European society portraits, Vos rendered his ethnological subjects with dignity, care, and a certain amount of glamour. The "exotic" was made fashionable and tangible to his Western audience.

Perhaps it was this sensibility that made Vos's work appealing to the empress dowager. When he arrived in China, the empress had already been on the throne for more than 40 years, since the untimely death of the Xianfeng emperor, who had selected her as one of his concubines. As a woman from a low-ranking Manchu clan, Cixi owed her ascen-

sion to power to the fact that she had borne the emperor's only child. Following years of power struggles, Cixi found herself sole regent of China, supporting—or many would say controlling—first her son, then, following his death, her nephew.

Vos confronted an empress with a notorious reputation in both China and the West. While the first widely read and rather scandalous biography of her did not appear in England until 1910, she was by 1905 already the subject of much gossip and speculation in the Western press. She was accused of virtually imprisoning and poisoning her nephew, having his favorite concubine thrown down a well, and using money allocated to the weakened navy to refurbish imperial palaces.[11] But her initial support of the disastrous anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) did the most to tarnish her reputation among the foreign powers in Beijing and abroad. In a cover illustration from the French turn-of-the-century weekly, *Le Rire* (Figure 4), published several weeks after the Imperial Court declared war on the foreign legations in Beijing, the empress is shown hunched behind a fan, her long thumbnail pointing upward like a claw. In her left hand, she holds a bloodied knife, and several decapitated heads and corpses are impaled on the pike behind her. Powerful images such as this one attributed the murder of Westerners in China directly to the hand of the empress.

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Le Rire

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LE MUSÉE DES SOUVERAINS

S. M. L'IMPÉRATRICE DOUAIRIÈRE DE CHINE

C. Léandre del.

Résidant à Péking, sublime cité où
Je règne sous le nom si doux de Si-Tay-Hou
J'exècre qu'on m'ennuie, j'exècre qu'on me chine
Et n'aime qu'un pays vieux mais jaune, la Chine !

(Traduit du chinois par AGH NO! MAH TOH PÈH, correspondant du *Rire*.)

En voyant mon profil (?) qui n'a rien d'un minois
Chacun croirait que la Chine ne reste au Chinois
Jusques au jour où Dieu, laissant les anciens moules,
Fasse pousser des dents en la bouche des poules.

Dessin de C. Léandre.

4. Charles Lucien Léandre, *S. M. L'Impératrice Douairière de Chine*, front cover of *Le Rire*, 14 July 1900. Widener Library, Harvard College Library.

The traditional sequestering of the imperial family within court walls added to the sense of distrust and suspicion that surrounded her. In the aftermath of the humiliating failure of the Boxer Rebellion, which greatly weakened the Qing dynasty, Cixi sought a rapprochement with the West. The empress dowager realized that in order to assuage the Western powers, she needed to make her court and herself more accessible.[12]

Despite the insular court structure, which hampered her actions and literally walled her off from the realities of everyday life among her subjects, the empress was well aware in 1905 of the powers of image making, as demonstrated by the pageantry of her

awe-inspiring, eunuch-borne arrival, described by Vos. She admired and identified with Queen Victoria of England, whose assumption of power as a young woman, widowhood, and long reign paralleled her own. The British queen was famously media-savvy, distributing images of herself and her family to the press, via painting, photography, and prints, that fostered perceptions of her as a mother and wife who retained her femininity even in the context of her political power. The empress dowager hung engravings of Queen Victoria and the royal family in her own private apartments.[13]

She invited diplomats, missionaries, and (most importantly) their wives into the imperial sanctum where she charmed her guests with entertainment and gifts. The American women who thus had ongoing access to the empress proved to be among her most vocal defenders to their friends and family back home. One of Cixi's frequent guests was Sarah Pike Conger, wife of the American ambassador to Beijing.[14] Conger came to admire the empress dowager and proposed having a portrait painted of her to counter the negative images being published by the foreign press. With this intention, in 1903 Conger invited American artist Katherine Carl, trained at the Académie Julian in Paris and living in Shanghai with her brother, to Beijing. Carl's large oil was shipped to America and exhibited at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904.[15]

Despite the accounts of her that prevailed in the press, the empress was respected and held in high regard by many who met her at court. The Carl commission caused a small rivalry for her favor between the legations.[16] Officials of the Dutch legation, feeling slighted that Holland, with its strong tradition in the practice of portraiture, had been superseded in this instance by the Americans, advocated for Hubert Vos to come paint the empress dowager's portrait. They were perhaps unaware that by the time of his arrival in 1905, he had become an American citizen.[17]

The story of Vos's encounter with the empress survives primarily through letters he sent back home to his family, and the analysis presented in this paper of his interaction with the empress is reliant on the singular perspective of his voice; the artist may have exaggerated the scope of his contact with the empress for the benefit of his audience. Nevertheless, the terms of Vos's descriptions of his experiences are enlightening, and he is explicit about the impact his fleeting interactions with Cixi had on the creation of the Summer Palace portrait. In his correspondence, Vos emphasized the difficulties of his commission: he had to appear at court at 5 a.m. to meet with the empress and had only four brief sessions with her; his studio, on the top floor of a Beijing hotel, was a sauna in the summer heat; the robes, accessories, and furnishings he had been promised by the eunuchs to use in his studio never materialized and he had to scrounge his own.[18] And yet his fascination with the empress dowager was palpable in his description of her: "Erect, with a tremendous will power, more than I have ever seen in a human

being. Hard, firm will and thinking lines, and with all that a brow full of kindness and love for the beautiful. I fell straight in love with her."[19] Vos's account, which stands in sharp contrast to the image of the demoniacal figure in the *Rire* caricature, conveys the charisma the empress exerted over her visitors.

5. *Portrait of Lirongbao's Wife*, Qing Dynasty, 18th–19th century. Hanging scroll: ink and color on silk, 69 15/16 × 38 13/16 in. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Purchase, Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program, and partial gift of Richard G. Pritzlaff.

Vos began his work with a sketch of the empress, outlining her features and blocking in shading. His plan was to make a smaller study of her head and features while she modeled for him, then to create the full-length commission from that study.[20] Following the second session, he said, she asked to see what he had done and through a translator expressed her critique, demanding "no shadows, no shadows, no shadows."[21] Another anecdote he shared with his family demonstrates the awe he felt in her presence and the pride he felt in her attention. In a pivotal moment after the third session, the empress approached Vos, taking his pencil in her own hand and making an experimental mark on his sketch. "This is the nearest ever a white man has been to her," he wrote. In the end, he became a complete convert. "I resolved to paint her as if I were a Chinaman myself," he stated.[22]

The formidable empress had an extraordinary impact on Vos: her imposing bearing, her outspoken critique of his work, his desire to please her, as a result of these factors he adapted his usual practices and conventions to her demands. To a certain extent, this meant setting aside his own European, academic preconceptions about portraiture. Chinese imperial portrait conventions dictated generality over specificity.[23] Facial features were carefully delineated, but by the time of the Qing dynasty, imperial portraiture had become increasingly frontal, symmetrical, and decorative, as in the probably posthumous portrait of the Qianlong emperor's mother-in-law (Figure 5). Renderings of emperors and empresses were more and more schematic and ritualized; there was almost no palpable body under the symbol-laden robes. As a result, imperial portraiture became less the depiction of an individual and more a symbolic representation of the state.[24]

Adding force to the empress's opinions, perhaps, was the fact that she was trained as an artist herself. Most of her surviving paintings date from after the Boxer Rebellion, when she gave them as gifts to foreign visitors. She selected modest subjects—birds, flowers, and pines, or large-scale calligraphic paintings of a single auspicious character. An example of one of these works is *Fungi and Bats* of 1898, a delicately painted still life on a surface of light brown wash now in the collection of the Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.[25] These works were, like Chinese export porcelain, geared toward a non-native audience; they were not produced in fulfillment of exacting Chinese artistic standards, but they succeeded in pleasing the empress's visitors.

Vos grasped what the empress expected of him, despite his own preferences. As he initially noted, "I would have preferred a darker, more mysterious, less symmetrical background."[26] But he adapted to the empress's wishes, and her influence is apparent in the final full-length portrait. Measuring 92 by 54 inches, the portrait is housed in a frame commissioned by the empress. Within the rigidly symmetrical composition, the tiny woman is ensconced among auspicious paraphernalia. The pyramidal stacks of apples, the peacock fans, the bamboo-painted backdrop, and the banner over her head (giving her name and title) dominate the composition. Rendered as requested with no shadows, the empress appears quite youthful, even ageless, and her body seems to disappear within her robes. The peony-decorated fan she holds across her body adds to that effect. Vos reserved his skills in realism for the accoutrements of the throne and surrounding elements, which are rendered in perspective and with shading. The stylistic combination thus incorporates two schemes of visuality, with a result that the painting appears not quite Chinese, and not quite Western. The difference in composition, lighting, and formality is especially apparent when Vos's portrait of the empress is compared with the full-length rendering of his wife Eleanor (Figure 3) or his earlier ethnological portraits from 1893 through 1899. Compared with the naturalism of those works, in which the figure seems to breathe before our eyes, his rendering of the empress is rigid and contained.

The painting was completed in mid-August, and Vos presented it at court. He astutely remarked, "The whole get-up is a symbolical and allegorical composition, more like a monument than a portrait."[27] Cixi's pleasure was expressed in English directly to Vos: "Very good, very good," she commented, according to Vos's account.[28] The portrait was a collaboration between sitter and artist. The empress dictated the symbolic setting, the pose, and the idealized rendering of her face and body. Vos translated her vision into a "monument" of fluid oil paint, combining Chinese and European styles into a hybrid image that falls into neither school.

Unlike Carl's portrait of the empress, Vos's painting seems to have been a private commission, intended for the audience of the imperial court. During Cixi's brief remaining lifetime, it would not be displayed in an exhibition or hung in a public place for viewing, nor would it eventually function as a traditional ancestor portrait for acts of reverence toward the empress's spirit. In a way, the very act of having the portrait painted—the empress's gesture of summoning this artist from across the world to capture her likeness—may have been the central point. By inviting Vos, Cixi demonstrated to those at court her newfound "openness" to Western influence and practices. At the same time, Vos responded to her aesthetic and cultural sensibilities enough to create what he felt was, in his words, a "semi-Chinese picture."[29]

The second, smaller portrait of the empress (measuring 66 ¾ × 48 11⁄16 inches), completed by Vos upon his return to New York in 1906, is probably based on the original sketch he began at court.[30] If the Summer Palace painting represents a collaboration between artist and sitter, the Harvard portrait hews more closely to the artist's preferences, while still revealing a certain amount of the empress's influence.

The empress dowager would not have approved of Vos's three-quarter-length image, as compositions that cropped the imperial body were considered inauspicious. This painting, however, was planned not for presentation at the imperial court but for exhibition at the 1906 Paris Salon, and Vos's composition, which honed in on the empress's face and figure, gave his intended audience a sense of the physical immediacy of his subject in a way that a full-length painting would not. This time, he also got his "darker, more mysterious, less symmetrical" background. He used dark, smoky tones and the image of a dragon slithering through clouds to create an atmospheric surround for the empress. Vos's three-quarter-length composition and dark background draw out the beauty of her accessories: we can see the luster of the pearls in her pierced ears, the sheen of her silk robe, the glow of jade bracelets, nail guards, and rings. Adding to the dramatic presentation of his piece, Vos placed the painting in a massive, dark frame decorated with cloisonné panels and corner segments of open carving.[31]

At the same time, he largely adhered to the symmetry, frontality, and rigidity of the Summer Palace portrait, exoticizing his usual, more naturalistic style. As with that version, the empress's body is lost here under the folds of her beautifully patterned robe. Although Vos described this painting as showing the empress "as old as she is," he nevertheless couldn't help deploying the tools of his trade to idealize her. By the age of 70, the empress's skin was damaged from years of the lead-based make-up she wore, and she had suffered a stroke in 1904. In the manner of Chinese ancestor portraits, Vos's treatment of her erased any evidence of her illness.[32] When we compare his supposedly more realistic version with contemporaneous photographs of

the empress, we can see how Vos narrowed her face, shortened the distance between her nose and upper lip, emphasized her eyelashes, lifted her jawline, and softened what few shadows there are, giving her skin an airbrushed smoothness; all of this in keeping with Anglo-European conventions of beauty. The slight shadows at the corners of her mouth soften her forthright expression, so that she is at once severe, imperious, and feminine.

For his Salon audience, Vos countered negative images of the empress prevalent in the West with a visually compelling, dramatic, but stylistically eccentric portrait. Using his conservative, realistic style blended with some characteristics of imperial portraiture, the artist presented for his viewers his vision of the empress: charismatic, powerful, wealthy, and exotic. He advertised his skills and his social and political connections, as the portrait demonstrated his personal access to the "Goddess of four hundred million people," a woman who remained largely inaccessible and controversial to Westerners. Her status was reflected in the reception accorded to Vos's portrait at the Salon exhibition: it was not placed on the line, an honor usually accorded to sovereign portraits.[33]

Vos had grand hopes for his paintings of the empress and their impact on his career. He wrote, "The book of a reigning dynasty is a secret closed book and comes only to light . . . when her dynasty ends. Then her life and her reign will be written and I will figure in it."[34] In terms of his own career and critical reception, he was correct. Within the chronicles of Cixi's life, however, Vos's portrait is merely a footnote. The portrait she commissioned served her aims at the time, demonstrating her openness to Western culture and modernity to her intimate audience at court. But the portrait's existence was for a long time overshadowed by the great political upheavals that took place shortly after her death in 1908, and lost within the cloud of scandals and rumors that obscured the accounting of the empress's life and reign. For us, the two paintings remain as the unusual evidence of the encounter between two cultures, two aesthetics, and ultimately, two individuals.

Notes

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1. Hubert Vos and Eleanor Kaikilani Vos, "Adaptation of His Letters From Peking by his Wife, Lani, Thinking of a Magazine Article," (typed transcript), undated, 5, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum curatorial file, 1943,162.

2. For Vos's background, see "Hubert Vos Dead, Portrait Painter," *New York Times*, 9 January 1935, 19; Hubert Vos, "Autobiographical Letter," in István L. Szénássy, *Hubert Vos, Dutch-American Painter* (Stamford, CT: Stamford Museum and Maastricht, Netherlands: Bonnefantenmuseum, 1979), 9; and *Rulers of the Far East: An Exhibition of the Works of Hubert Vos* (New York: The Holland House Corporation of the Netherlands, 1944). Vos's portrait of Queen Wilhelmina is reproduced in Anne van Grevenstein-Kruse et al., *Hubert Vos: en het verhaal van een portret* (Amsterdam: Arte et Cetera, 2008), 21.

3. Vos, "Autobiographical Letter," 9.

4. See "A Day's Weddings," *New York Times*, 6 November 1897, 7, and "A Romantic Marriage," *New York Times*, 7 November 1897, 5. The latter article explained that Mrs. Vos was a cousin of the ex-queen of Hawaii, and divorced from John Graham.

5. Vos believed there were different conceptions of beauty among the various races of the world. He wrote, "Of course the distinction I claim as original and most deserving in my opinion is, to do for the aboriginal races what has been done for centuries for the Caucasian races by so many gifted portrait painters." Vos, "Autobiographical Letter," 9–10. His notion that the different races were quickly vanishing was timely as it was at the 1893 Chicago Exposition that Frederick Jackson Turner presented his paper, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History"; see *The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner*, ed. Everett E. Edwards (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938), 185–229.

6. Through his friend Leigh Hunt, Vos received access to Korean nobility, so that he was able to make portraits of Prince Min-sa-ho, the American-educated cousin of the emperor, and the emperor himself. In China, Vos's friend General Norman Munthe introduced him to Yuan Shi-kai, who recommended him in turn to Prince Qing. Vos, "Autobiographical Letter," 10–11.

7. Ibid., 11.

8. "Hubert Vos Dead," *New York Times*, 19.

9. For the quotes, see "Are Racial Types Dying Out?" *New York Times*, 1 November 1907, 8; and de Kay, "Painting Racial Types," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 60, no. 2 (June 1900): 169.

10. "American Studio Talk: Notes on Art in New York," *International Studio* 13 (April 1901): 150. See also István L. Szénássy's analysis of Vos's style in "Addenda H. Vos," in Szénássy, *Hubert Vos, Dutch-American Painter*, 21.

11. J.O.P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse, *China Under the Empress Dowager: Being the History of the Life and Times of Tzŭ Hsi* (London: William Heinemann, 1910). As one of the first biographies of Cixi, it was widely read and initially well received, but later discredited. Hugh Trevor-Roper in *The Hermit of Peking: The Hidden Life of Sir Edmund Backhouse* (New York: Knopf, 1976) exposed Backhouse as a con man who had forged or looted rare books and documents he bequeathed to the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Arthur Hummel's entry on the empress dowager remains a reliable if brief biography; Hummel, "Hsiao-ch'in Hsien Huang-hou," *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644–1912)*, vol. 1 (A–O), 295–300, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943). More recent studies have attempted to open the historical records to find a more accurate representation of her actions. See, for example, Sue Fawn Chung, "The Much Maligned Empress Dowager: A Revisionist Study of the Empress Dowager Tz'u-Hsi," *Modern Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (1979): 177–96, doi:10.1017/S0026749X00008283. Sterling Seagrave also gives a sympathetic portrait in *Dragon Lady: The Life and Legend of the Last Empress of China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).

12. As Arthur Hummel wrote, "Her attitude toward foreigners was now one of gratitude for having spared her from deserved humiliation and for allowing her to return to power." Hummel, "Hsiao-ch'in Hsien Huang-hou," 299.

13. Grant Hayter-Menzies discusses Queen Victoria's distribution of images of herself and her family to the press as an example that Cixi looked to late in her own reign, *Imperial Masquerade: The Legend of Princess Der Ling* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 200, 213.

14. Conger documented her experiences at court in letters to her family, now in the collection of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University. See Sarah Pike Conger, *Letters from China, With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909).

15. Initially, the empress was resistant to having her portrait painted, as traditionally that was an honor reserved for the deceased in China; Grant Hayter-Menzies, *Imperial Masquerade*, 193–95. Imperial culture emphasized the sequestering of the royal family; for the empress dowager to suddenly allow photographs of herself to be made available and to commission both Carl's and Vos's painted portraits was revolutionary. Lin explains the initial resistance and eventual acceptance of photography by the imperial court, and the exchange among international rulers of images of themselves; in 1902, Cixi had received a family photograph from Czar Nicholas II of Russia. Xunling

(1874–1943), the son of Lady Yu Geng, senior lady-in-waiting to the empress, was allowed to take photographs of the empress dowager during the period 1903 to 1905; a number of these are in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, and the Freer Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian has 44 photonegatives. See Lin Jing, *The Photographs of Cixi in the Collection of the Palace Museum*, trans. Shaoyi Li (Beijing: Forbidden City Publishing House, 2002). Like Vos, Katherine Carl made two portraits. One she gifted to the empress dowager; the other was transported to the U.S. for exhibition. This latter portrait was in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum until recently, when it was transferred to the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. Carl wrote a memoir, *With the Empress Dowager of China* (New York: The Century Company, 1905).

16. According to a 1905 *New York Times* article, when Carl was appointed to paint the empress's portrait, the U.S. Embassy took "all the honors" and the other legations "turned through envy and jealousy the color of jade and saffron." "Painting an Empress: Hubert Vos, K.C.D.D., the First Man to Portray the Dowager Empress of China," *New York Times*, 17 December 1905, X8.

17. See "Painting an Empress," X8.

18. Letter from Hubert Vos to "My dear Friends," (typed transcript), August 18, 1905, 4–5. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum curatorial file, 1943.162.

19. Vos and Vos, "Adaptation of His Letters From Peking," 6.

20. "I shall take a small canvas and paint the head from life in 2 sittings and paint the larger canvas afterwards from that and with the help of the photographs." Letter from Hubert Vos to "My dear Lani," (typed transcript), June 12, 1905, 5. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum curatorial file, 1943.162. There is some debate about whether or not Vos took photographs of the empress. No such photos exist today in the family collection; conversation of the author with Dr. Hubert D. Vos, the artist's grandson, 13 July 2009. When asked in an interview if he took photos of the empress, the painter replied, "Yes, indeed. But of course they are for my own use. I would not have them developed in China for fear the photographer might sell copies"; "Painting an Empress," *New York Times*, X8. He noted that photographs of the empress were for sale in Chinese bookstores.

21. "She now looked at my work and talked and pointed at different parts of my picture, and Wu Ting Fang translated and told me I had to make no shadows under or above the eyes, the eyes wide open, the mouth full and up, not drooping, the brows straight, the nose no shadows—no shadows, no shadows, no shadows, no wrinkles. . . . Finally, I began to understand that I was not allowed to paint realistically." Vos and Vos, "Adaptation of His Letters from Peking," 7.

22. In a 1905 interview, Vos commented, "I resolved to paint her as if I were a Chinaman myself, not omitting, of course, the technical qualities in which our painting differs from the Chinese and Japanese, but imagining myself an Oriental imbued with reverence for what is greatest in Chinese art, thoroughly saturated with the national awe for antique ceremonial objects." "Painting an Empress," *New York Times*, X8.

23. Alan Priest, "Portraits of the Court of China," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series, 1, no. 5 (January 1943): 185. doi:10.2307/3257047.

24. Wen C. Fong, "Imperial Portraiture in the Song, Yuan, and Ming Periods," *Ars Orientalis*, 25 (1995): 47–60. Fong traces this shift, taking place beginning around 1500, to the influence of Tibetan mandala painting. "Tibetan influence continued to be felt at the imperial court through the fifteenth century, and imperial portraits after Xuande [the Xuande emperor, r. 1425–35] became increasingly frontal, culminating in a new, symmetrically balanced and flatly decorative hieratic composition, in the style of a Tibetan mandala." 57. See also Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Worshiping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), esp. 117–41. On symbolic representations of the state, see Fong, "Imperial Portraiture," 57–58.

25. Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire 1796–1911* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1992), 10, 36. The scroll is reproduced on page 12. Attributions of Cixi's work are complicated by the fact that she had a number of women artists (known as "substitute brushes") working for her who produced some of these paintings; see Marsha Weidner's catalogue entry for *Pine and Fungi (May You Have Great Fortune and Longevity)*, 156–59 in Weidner, et al., *Views from the Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists 1300–1912* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1988). Thanks to Robert Mowry and Melissa Moy for bringing the Harvard scroll to my attention.

26. Vos and Vos, "Adaptation of His Letters from Peking," 5. The Summer Palace portrait was extensively restored in 2007–08. See Anne van Grevenstein-Kruse et al., *Hubert Vos: en het verhaal van een portret* (Amsterdam: Arte et Cetera, 2008).

27. Vos, "My dear Friends," 18 August 1905, 2.

28. Vos was almost certainly paid for his commission, although he playfully denied it in the press; see "Painting an Empress," *New York Times*, X8. In a letter to his wife, he said that he set an initial price for the commission thinking he was being summoned to paint ministers to the court, and that had he known his true subject was the empress, he would have doubled his price; Vos, "My dear Lani," June12, 1905, 3.

29. Vos and Vos, "Adaptation of His Letters from Peking," 10.

30. After completion of the full-size portrait, he wrote: "I have in the meantime my study from life, data, sketches, photos, etc. to paint a second picture for myself for exhibition and this time as old as she is . . . . I am gathering the different details I may need, so I am able to paint this picture in New York." Letter from Hubert Vos to "My dear Lani and Friends," (typed transcript), August 29, 1905, 5. Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum curatorial file, 1943,162. It is unknown whether or not the empress was aware of the second portrait.

31. Of the 786 photographs of the empress in the Palace Museum collection, only one is a half-length composition; the others are all full-length. The photo is listed in an inventory as "1 Large Half-Length Imperial Portrait in Flowery Dress and with Hair Decoration," in Lin, *Photographs of Cixi*, 14. Lin notes the negative connotations of cropped compositions, 22. The frame was almost certainly made in China during Vos's stay there.

32. Hayter-Menzies, *Imperial Masquerade*, 267. Stuart and Rawski note how portrait painters in the late Qing dynasty, influenced by photography, could create a composite image that erases evidence of illness and instead project the subject's "heavenly endowed visage and venerable old age," *Worshiping the Ancestors*, 174.

33. One American writer compared the empress dowager to a "shrewd old Scotchwoman." "Are Racial Types Dying Out?" *New York Times*, 8.

34. Vos, "My dear Lani and Friends," August 29, 1905, 5.

Performing Identity

Overtly, Covertly, or Not at All

Putting "Japan" in Japanese American Painting

Bert Winther-Tamaki

The study of Asian American art of the mid-twentieth century has undergone a significant change in recent years. Not long ago, "Asian tradition" was still frequently identified as a definitive component of Asian American art. For example, in 1997 a major exhibition made ground-breaking contributions to knowledge about Asian American art history by focusing on relationships between "Asian tradition" and modern abstraction, while continuing to embrace such Orientalist propositions as "to the Eastern mind, nature is the irrefutable, ultimate source of all things, including artistic expression."[1] In contrast, a 2008 multi-author volume on Asian American art history, the most extensive study of its kind, starts out in Gordon Chang's foreword with a critical focus on the racial thinking that so often locked Asian American art into stereotypes: "Viewers could rarely free themselves from the assumption that art produced by persons who looked 'Asian' somehow had to express something 'Asian.' Mainstream spectators assumed that racial or immutable cultural sensibilities indelibly marked artistic production."[2] Another influential voice in this important recognition has been that of Elaine H. Kim, who sought to extricate Asian American art from the *idée fixe* of Asian race by affirming its interstiality and hybridity. "Instead of viewing Asian American art as . . . imperfectly replicating 'real Asian art,'" she proposed situating it in "the untranslatable, incommensurate in-between, in the interstice between mainstream and Asian American (as opposed to Asian) cultural traditions."[3] Thus, "Asia" or "Asian tradition" was retired from its status as an essential element of the study of mid-century Asian American art history in order to disencumber this art from racial assumptions. To be sure, the cumulative weight of the twentieth-century language that exoticized and marginalized Asian American artists is so staggering that one hesitates to revisit Kim's move away from Asian tradition. Nonetheless,

jettisoning all concepts of "Asian tradition" or "Asia" makes it difficult to understand the context of art produced in the early and mid-twentieth century, before the cognitive term "Asian American" existed. Artists and viewers in this period typically thought about what we now consider "Asian American art" in the oppositional terms of "Asian" and "American," or analogues such as "East" and "West," rather than the hybridizing in-betweenness of "Asian American," so ideas about Asia are critical to the recovery of the meanings their art possessed in earlier historical moments.

I propose three speculative categories for investigating the role of "Asian tradition" and more general concepts of "Asia" in mid-twentieth-century Asian American art. Art objects in the first category called the viewer's attention to themes of Asia by means of conspicuous signs of Asianness emblazoned on their form. This was achieved by the selection of symbols, motifs, titles, materials, or techniques associated with Asia. But the term "Asia" designates a vast, open-ended pool of signs, or meanings, and it is important to emphasize that while they were recognizably Asian in places like New York, Seattle, and Berkeley, they were not necessarily perceived as Asian in Tokyo, Calcutta, or Urumqi. A second sort of Asian American art is characterized by an absence of references to Asia or Asian tradition. But although we may determine that an artist did not intend to refer to Asia in a given work of art, and we may even corroborate that intention with an art-historical judgment that there is no Asian presence in that work of art, racially determined readings of such works frequently projected a ghostly presence of Asia into their forms or content. In a final category, Asian American works were endowed with veiled references to Asian content, sometimes only recognizable with the aid of supplementary texts explaining the relationship of the work to Asian culture. This often entailed vague subjective assessments by viewers, such as the comment of a student in my seminar who looked at a painting and responded that "something about it feels Asian, but I don't know what." Such effects were often obtained through creative processes of combining Asian-associated forms together with forms alluding to other cultures. Typically, the aim of this type of art, however, was not hybridization but universalizing synthesis.

Each of these three types of Asian referentiality could be matched closely to works of art by Americans of other ethnicities; European American, African American, and Latino American artists could and did create works of art that emblazoned, omitted, or veiled references to Asia. Nevertheless, viewers' presumptions about an involuntary link between the Asian American artist's identity and the cultural signification of his or her work of art affected the reception and interpretation of such references to Asia in ways that did not pertain to artworks created by Americans of other ethnicities. Asian references in works by artists assumed to be of non-Asian identity were regarded as exoticizing or erudite forays into foreign culture, while similar references by American artists of Asian ethnicity were seen as evidence of a return to origins or as the

racially determined expression of collective identity. Clearly, Asian referentiality—whether emblazoned, veiled, or even absent in the sense described above—constitutes a significant optic that distinguishes Asian American art from other American art.

1. Chiura Obata, *Setting Sun: Sacramento Valley*, ca. 1925. Hanging scroll: ink, color, and gold on silk mounted on paper, 107½ × 69 in. Collection of Gyo Obata. Photo courtesy of the Obata family.

This three-pronged optic of Asian American art did not always operate in the same manner for artists of different Asian American ethnicities, however. For example, as Gordon Chang has demonstrated, Chinese American and Japanese American artists' experiences of World War II differed dramatically because China was a U.S. ally, while Japan was an enemy.[4] Thus, I will restrict this study to the specific experiences of four Japanese American painters who worked before, during, and after World War II. Although Japanese referentiality emerged and subsided in each painter's work in correspondence with his or her efforts to contend with specific social and cultural contexts of American history, these case studies also outline larger historical patterns in the development of Japanese American art. The first two modes of Japanese referentiality were more prevalent in the early twentieth century, though emblazoned signs of Japan became scarce during the war years when such signs were stigmatized by association with the Japanese enemy. Veiled references came into favor in the context of post-war abstraction.

European American admirers of the paintings of Chiura Obata (1885–1975) typically appreciated his pictures in terms that related them to Japan. They were aware that he had been trained as a painter in Tokyo before moving to California in 1903, and some were also aware that he acquired the silk, ink, and pigments for paintings like *Setting Sun: Sacramento Valley* (Figure 1) from suppliers in Japan. It was not hard to understand how the lacy gold-leafing on the edges of these tongues of flame relate to prototypes in the gold clouds and cresting waves of Momoyama and Edo period art. Moreover, this work is a hanging scroll with an ornate brocade silk mounting. In short, such California landscapes were emblazoned with conspicuous references to Japan. Viewers

were fascinated by what a *San Francisco Examiner* critic described in 1932 as "America contemplated through the eyes of an Oriental." The same critic remarked that Obata's paintings "are pure Nippon, or, if you like, with just a suspicion here and there of Western influence, though even that is rather dubious."[5] No doubt, the "suspicion" that Obata might have embedded Western formal or technical influences in his pictures, marring the supposed purity of the Japanese lens he brought to his California scenes, was fostered by awareness that by 1932 he had resided in the Bay Area for nearly three decades.

It certainly would be a mistake to regard the beauty of Obata's painting as "purely" Japanese, if this connotes some vision of a Japan untouched by either modernity or contact with European art. The artist's father, Obata Rokuichi, was a painter associated with Yōga, literally "Western painting," a modern Japanese movement of oil painting focused on European techniques and canons. Obata himself was trained in Nihonga, literally "Japanese painting," a modern reconstitution of certain types of past Japanese and East Asian art through a keen awareness of modern European painting. Moreover, Obata created the style that was appreciated by American viewers as a Japanese aesthetic during his early decades in the Bay Area through a process of negotiation with his American environment. During his 12 years (1915–27) working as an illustrator for *Japan,* a magazine published in San Francisco's Japantown, he developed his artistic personality in the tense environment of the segregated Japanese minority community. The year before painting *Setting Sun, Sacramento Valley*, Obata, his 12-year-old son, and two other Japanese Americans were hiking in northern California when a local accosted them and warned, "Japs have been prohibited in my county for 30 years. Get out of here as fast as you can. If you don't, I make no guarantee for your physical safety."[6] The violent threat of such racism was not to be pacified by the beauty of "pure Nippon," but many European Americans in California were drawn to Obata's creative work because of its manifestation of a combination of beauty, skill, and materials that they perceived to be Japanese. Worth Ryder, a professor in the art department at the University of California, Berkeley, was his devoted companion during a strenuous six-week sketching trip to Yosemite in 1927. At one point in their trek through the High Sierras, Ryder humorously proclaimed Obata to be "an emissary for the Mikado looking for the most beautiful spot on the earth."[7] Inspired by his Japanese American companion, Ryder became a devotee of Japanese ink-painting and was also instrumental in the appointment of Obata in 1932 as his colleague on the Berkeley art faculty. Thus, the appeal to European Americans of the mode of Japanese tradition that Obata developed in California as well as Japan had tremendous consequences for the artist; by invoking the notion of an apolitical, ahistorical, "traditional" Japanese aesthetic, he secured the interest and amity of individuals like Worth

Ryder as well as high honors and enviable success among California art cognoscenti in a larger environment of anti-Japanese racism.

The idyllic quality of Obata's painting was not disabled entirely, but transformed by his imprisonment as an enemy alien in 1942, first at the Tanforan Assembly Center south of San Francisco, and then in desert barracks of the Topaz Relocation Center in Utah. In Topaz, Obata returned to the same glorious vision of the sunset that he had painted in Sacramento in better times almost 20 years earlier. But in his *Sunset, Water Tower, Topaz* (1943), the scarlet flames lighting up the sky became the backdrop to the silhouette of a water tower, a structure referencing the camp where Obata was incarcerated by the War Relocation Authority on account of his racial and national identity.[8]

2. Miné Okubo, *Mother and Cat*, 1941. Tempera on masonite, 29 3/4 × 24 in. The Oakland Museum of California, Gift of the Collectors Gallery. Photo courtesy Oakland Museum of California.

Miné Okubo (1912–2001) was an art student in Obata's department at Berkeley, obtaining her master's degree in art there in 1938. She was also a *nisei* (second-generation Japanese American), and was probably aware of Professor Obata's outspoken views about how nisei should position themselves vis-à-vis Japan and the United States:

> *Since you have received the blood of Japanese people, I hope you would take interest in the Japanese people who were cultivated through that blood, and search deeply for Japan. Then, face the great nature of the America that you live in and develop your path. Listen to nature. Listen quietly to the voice nature calls out to you. Apply the cultivation you receive from nature, and contribute to your future society, to American society.*[9]

Obata urged *nisei* to do what he presumably attempted when he painted the sunset at Topaz, namely transcend American racism with a Japanese racial aesthetic articulating the beneficent magnanimity of nature. In her *Mother and Cat* (Figure 2), however, Okubo

3. Miné Okubo, *People were in Shock*, 1943. Charcoal on paper, 14 × 20 in. Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles.

turns her back on the path advocated and modeled by Obata. According to Betty La Duke, Okubo's painting would not manifest an interest in "Japanese heritage" until the late 1950s or 1960s.[10] Indeed, rather than study with Professor Obata, Okubo had trained under other faculty members at Berkeley in techniques of fresco and mural painting, attaining skills that led, in 1939, to a stint working under Mexican muralist Diego Rivera on a San Francisco mural project. Stylistically, these references predominate in Okubo's *Mother and Cat,* a picture constructed in simplified, rounded forms filled with short, dry, parallel brushstrokes and bounded by thin, sinuous contour lines. Moreover, the gentle warpage of perspective and anatomical deformation give the painting a naïve style typical of modernist painters who were interested in American folk art.[11]

Despite the lack of artistic reference to "Japan" in Okubo's *Mother and Cat*, this painting does make an important statement about the artist's own Japanese American identity through its monumental depiction of the woman identified by the title as her mother. It was painted around the time of Okubo's mother's death, no doubt explaining its static commemorative character. Obata's comment that "you have received the blood of Japanese people" refers to family and racial ties to the Japanese nation, and Okubo's mother was perhaps the artist's most tangible link to Japan. But the Rivera-like manner of her portrayal does little to visualize the Japanese memories and experiences of this *issei* (first-generation) woman, who, in fact, had studied calligraphy and painting at the Tokyo Art Institute before immigrating to California. Rather Okubo shows her mother clasping a Bible in her powerful,

sensuous hand and reigning with reassuring calm over an idyllic view of the rural town in Southern California where the artist grew up.

This serene nostalgia collapsed with Okubo's evacuation by the War Relocation Authority to the same desert barracks as Obata. But while Obata invested an almost religious faith in the rich warmth of the sunset sky, Okubo funneled the darkness from the dust clouds in the sky into the interiors of the bodies of fellow internees (Figure 3). The internment experience moved the artist to develop extraordinary bonds of empathy with members of her Japanese American community, and she expressed these powerful feelings through a modernist language of expressive draftsmanship.

Much like Okubo, Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953) darkened the faces and depressed the spirits of his figures, evoking associations with the Japanese enemy status that alienated him from his environment at a time of total war. Both artists left their expressions of this experience ambiguous enough to permit more universal thoughts of the tragedy of war, a vagueness of reference necessary in wartime America, where the sympathetic expression of specifically Japanese or Japanese American suffering attributed to American aggressors would have been unthinkable. Kuniyoshi's painting avoids Obata's obvious references to Japan or Japanese tradition, much like Okubo's painting and charcoal study. But unlike Okubo, who created *People Were in Shock* while living among fellow Japanese Americans at the desert barrack camp in Utah, Kuniyoshi kept his imagery remote from the Japanese American community as well.

Kuniyoshi crafted his art for the European American dominated art world centered in New York City, and indeed was the most successful Japanese American artist of his generation in terms of purchases, critical acclaim, and awards. Kuniyoshi's success was gravely threatened but not reversed by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. In striking contrast to Chiura Obata on the West Coast, Kuniyoshi appealed to New York cognoscenti with a scrupulous avoidance of conspicuous signifiers of cultural alterity—or "otherness"—in his painting. In 1942 the *Art News* reviewer Rosamund Frost explained that about 10 years earlier Kuniyoshi had already "assimilated something from his contemporaries—a touch of [Alexander] Brook in the pose, a little of [Bernard] Karfiol in the glance, a trace of [Jules] Pascin's voluptuous softness." Thus, Frost concluded, "[P]erhaps this is the point at which he stopped being an Oriental and became the American he is today."[12] Indeed, the style, materials, imagery, and sultry mood of Kuniyoshi's canvases such as *Relaxing* (Figure 4) share a strong American period resemblance with the works of his European American friends and rivals, such as the artists Frost named, painters who were considered leading lights of American art at this time.

4. Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Relaxing*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 15 15/16 × 12 in. Collection of Soichiro Fukutake, Okayama, Japan © Estate of Yasuo Kuniyoshi/ Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Actually, Japanese oil painters working in Tokyo during the same period—Yasui Sôtarô, Matsumoto Shunsuke, and Asô Saburô, for example—painted in a similar mode to that of the New York artists identified by Frost as the beacons of Kuniyoshi's American style.[13] Kuniyoshi was well aware that School of Paris styles of painting were as prevalent in Tokyo as New York due to a 1931 trip to Japan, encounters with traveling Japanese artists, and exposure to contemporary Japanese art magazines. But Frost and most New Yorkers were either oblivious to modern Japanese art or derided it as derivative of "the West." They focused on cultivating an American national aesthetic based on minor differences between American and European art and were unwilling to countenance the fact that similar minor differences between Japanese and European art had brought about a situation where New York painting was visually similar to much of what constituted contemporary Japanese art. Therefore, if Kuniyoshi had wished to convey a positive sense of Japanese alterity to his New York spectators at this time without depending on assumptions about his racial identity, he probably would have had to use anachronistic iconographic attributes such as dressing his women in kimonos or placing Imari vases at their elbows. In the war climate, however, even such quaint signifiers of Japan had become anathema to American audiences.

Despite the absence of references to Japan in the painting of both Okubo and Kuniyoshi before and after the invasion of Pearl Harbor, both artists were called upon by American institutions to illustrate the Japanese enemy during the war. *Fortune* magazine commissioned Okubo to illustrate stereotypical images of Japanese civilians and soldiers in

1943,[14] while the Office of War Information (OWI) commissioned Kuniyoshi to illustrate anti-Japanese war propaganda posters in 1942. Neither artist had any particular experience illustrating Japanese subject matter, but as scholar ShiPu Wang has written of the selection of Kuniyoshi for creating propaganda posters, "it was precisely because of his race (and nationality) that [OWI] officials regarded him as an appropriate artist to portray the enemy—not the Germans, nor the Italians, but the Japanese."[15] Kuniyoshi's role in fashioning the American image of the Japanese enemy contributed to his wartime reputation as, in Rosamund Frost's words, "America's favorite Japanese."[16]

5. Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Rape*, 1942. Pencil on paper, 16¾ × 13¾ in. Collection of Soichiro Fukutake, Okayama, Japan © Estate of Yasuo Kuniyoshi/ Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Serving as an illustrator of images of the Japanese enemy to teach Americans who they were fighting against put Kuniyoshi in what must have been a psychologically tortuous position, for now it was his job to reinforce negative American stereotypes of Japanese men—stereotypes that imperiled his own standing in American society. One of the drawings Kuniyoshi submitted to the OWI (Figure 5) depicts a menacing Japanese soldier accosting a woman who closely resembles the dark-complexioned but vaguely Caucasian women that he painted so often in works such as *Relaxing.* The soldier's nationality is signified by his physiognomy and by the attribute of a ceremonial Japanese sword. Even before this period, the racialization of paintings such as *Relaxing,* from which Kuniyoshi had excluded references to Japan, was a routine thought process that provided the terms even for appreciative art criticism. For example, in 1937 a reviewer admired Kuniyoshi's painting as "the work of a strong-minded and deliberate individual through whose brain and through whose fingers happen to run the blood stream of the Orient."[17] But in his rape scene, Kuniyoshi's resistance to the racialization of his art collapsed. The ghostly presence of an alien Japaneseness, an

essentializing identity that had been projected by racially deterministic thinking onto his paintings, is vividly and explicitly materialized as a monstrous stereotype in his OWI poster design. This exceptional and shocking exposure invites an understanding of the more characteristic stance of his painting—that of omitting signs of Japanese otherness—as a posture of assimilationism. Drawing on Anne Cheng's psychoanalytic study of assimilation in Asian American literature, we might say that the "camouflage" was ripped away from a "subject who is constituted by debilitating difference."[18]

When not constrained by the desires and expectations of patrons such as the OWI or *Fortune* magazine, most Japanese American artists continued to avoid references to Japanese culture for a time after the war. In Miné Okubo's words, "anything Japanese was still rat poison."[19] But this situation changed dramatically in the early 1950s. Disempowered by defeat in war, Japan became an attractive field for American cultural consumers, ranging from scholars to avant-gardists to souvenir hunters. The first peak of this post-war American enthusiasm for Japanese culture came in the year 1954, when multiple Japanese-themed events were organized in New York City, including the construction of a temporary traditional Japanese house in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art and an exhibition of new Japanese abstract art from Tokyo at the Riverside Museum in New York City. This broad interest in Japan greatly affected Japanese American artists and their ambitions for success in the overwhelmingly European American art world centered in New York City. The same racial determinism that had led American cultural leaders to believe that a Japanese American artist would be uniquely suited to represent the Japanese enemy now led to the assumption that Japanese American artists were valuable sources of information about the mysteries of such Japanese cultural properties as calligraphy, Zen Buddhism, the tea ceremony, and ink painting. The first post-war wave of American interest in such Japanese topics coincided with the emergence of second-generation Abstract Expressionist painters. In this context, numerous European American as well as Asian American artists developed innovative ways to inscribe elements of Asian culture into their abstract paintings.[20]

One such artist, Mike Kanemitsu (1922–1992) had been painting figurative works as a student of Kuniyoshi at the beginning of the 1950s, but was soon won over by the exciting new abstraction of Jackson Pollock, Franz Kline, and other Abstract Expressionists. Kanemitsu became an intimate of this circle and would remember one friend from this milieu, the abstract painter Ad Reinhardt, as an erudite scholar knowledgeable in all fields of Asian philosophy and culture.[21] And while Kanemitsu was first groping his way toward abstraction and enthusiastically observing the innovations of another personal friend, Jackson Pollock, Reinhardt advised him, "Don't go along with crazy J.P. You're not an Expressionist—you're a natural romantic Impressionist."[22] This enigmatic injunction prompted

Kanemitsu to investigate relationships between his gestural abstraction and the East Asian art of calligraphy. In works such as *Quarter to Five* (Figure 6), however, the artist's professed interest in calligraphy remains a subtle presence, veiled beneath bright color, architectonic structure, and the viscous medium of oil on canvas.

6. Mike Kanemitsu, *Quarter to Five*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 49 4/5 × 60 1/16 in. Osaka Contemporary Art Center, Japan.

While continuing to work in oil on canvas, Kanemitsu also pursued a parallel practice of abstraction in the Japanese medium of *sumi,* black liquid ink on paper.[23] His black-and-white abstractions resonated with similar works by Abstract Expressionists such as Pollock, Kline, Robert Motherwell, and Philip Guston, but this practice held distinct attractions and risks for Kanemitsu and other Asian American artists. On the one hand, the artist's Asianness endowed the link between his abstract imagery and the East Asian art of calligraphy with a type of authenticity that appealed to the modernist ethos of an unmediated relationship between the artist's subjective identity and his creative work. On the other hand, many in this environment looked askance at what they regarded as an artist's too conspicuous or too deliberate reference to his or her Asian heritage. Thus, the prominent Japanese critic and art historian Fujieda Teruo would write, "One distinctive characteristic in Kanemitsu's oeuvre is the use of the calligraphic black line on a white ground. This immediately brings to mind the notion of a Japanese look. . . . But being an intelligent nisei artist, Kanemitsu understood that creating art that appeared Japanese for the sake of obtaining a Japanese look was a too-easy use of nationality."[24]

This rather narrow view of *nisei* artists presumed that they deliberately catered to an American taste for Japanese exotica. In fact, many Asian Americans were sensitive to the racial determinism that often stimulated European American desires to see evidence of Japanese identity in their art. And this awareness sometimes inhibited the expression of such interests or provided an incentive to veil them deeply within the mysterious forms of abstract tableaus. Still, Kanemitsu said that he felt a powerful attraction to calligraphic abstraction, including the work of contemporary Japanese avant-garde calligraphers such as Morita Shiryû

and Hidai Nankoku. He attributed this attraction to a sense of nostalgia that was a consequence of his long years of residence in the United States away from Japan.[25] This emotion-laden distance from Japan endowed Kanemitsu's veiled calligraphic abstraction with a personal significance that differentiated it from formally similar works by European American painters like Motherwell as well as Japanese artists like Morita Shiryû.

The four artists considered here illustrate historical patterns in the development of Japanese American painting that resonate broadly through the careers of many others. Chiura Obata's *Setting Sun* exemplifies a tendency in the prewar years to deliver accentuated signs of Japan, and this proved to be an effective way to contend with a social environment defined by a fascination for a particular view of Japanese aesthetics as well as anti-Asian racism. Both Miné Okubo and Yasuo Kuniyoshi rejected Obata's recommendation to seek Japanese aesthetic solutions for racism in America, and both excelled in their practice of mainstream styles of American art in their day. Although their art typically avoided Japanese referentiality, both Okubo and Kuniyoshi were chosen for the task of visualizing notions of "Japan" on account of their race, and both obliged by producing racialized Japanese images. Working in the milieu of second-generation Abstract Expressionism at a time when Japanese culture was a popular interest among many Americans, Mike Kanemitsu responded by investigating relationships between abstraction and calligraphy. Nonetheless, he veiled the presence of Asian content in his work, perhaps to avoid the appearance of catering to an exoticizing American taste for Asia. This veiling was more opaque in Kanemitsu's abstractions in oil on canvas than his works in sumi on paper, a medium that exposed tensions produced by his position between the Japanese and American art worlds.

As suggested at the outset, recent studies of Asian American art history have shifted away from earlier preferences for works manifesting "Asian tradition" in favor of greater sympathy for works that omit Asian references. But one lesson to be drawn from the case studies discussed here is that each of the three modes of Asian referentiality possessed potential gains and risks. Perhaps the best path for future studies of Asian American art of the mid-twentieth century is to put aside preferences—whether for art that references Asia overtly, covertly, or not at all—and recognize that each of these modes of painting was created under difficult circumstances of East–West race thinking, and each held great potential to be art that is beautiful, original, or admirable for its social content or critical stance.

Notes

1. Jeffrey Wechsler, "From Asian Traditions to Modern Expressions: Abstract Art by Asian Americans, 1945–1970," in *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970,* ed. Jeffrey Wechsler (New York: Harry N. Abrams, in association with the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, 1997), 89.

2. Gordon H. Chang, "Emerging from the Shadows: The Visual Arts and Asian American History," foreword to *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970,* ed. Gordon H. Chang, Mark Dean Johnson, and Paul J. Karlstrom (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), x.

3. Elaine H. Kim, "Interstitial Subjects" in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, *Fresh Talk/ Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 36.

4. Gordon H. Chang, "Deployments, Engagements, Obliterations: Asian American Artists and World War II," in Chang et al., *Asian American Art*, 111–39. This essay uses the term "Japanese American artist" to refer to artists who immigrated to the United States from Japan or whose ancestry was partly or wholly Japanese.

5. Quoted in *Chiura Obata*: *California Art Research,* ed. Gene Hailey, vol. 20, part 2 (WPA Project, 1937), 149.

6. Quoted in Shimojima Tetsurô, *Samurai to Kariforunia: ikyô no Nihon gaka Obata Chiura* (Tokyo: Shogakukan, 2000), 151.

7. Janice T. Driesbach and Susan Landauer, *Obata's Yosemite: The Art and Letters of Chiura Obata from His Trip to the High Sierra in 1927* (Yosemite Association, 1993), 48.

8. Obata's *Sunset, Water Tower, Topaz* is illustrated in Karin Higa, *The View from Within: Japanese American Art from the Internment Camps, 1942–1945* (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1992), 25.

9. Quoted by Shimojima, *Samurai to Kariforunia,* 159.

10. Betty La Duke, "On the Road: The Life of Miné Okubo," *Art Education* 40, no. 3 (1987): 46. doi:10.2307/3193056.

11. Mark Dean Johnson, in *Asian | American | Modern Art, Shifting Currents 1900–1970,* ed. Daniel Cornell and Mark Dean Johnson (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 62.

12. Rosamund Frost, "Kuniyoshi, American of Two Decades" *Art News* 41, no. 7 (15–31 May 1942): 19.

13. For the contextualization of Kuniyoshi's painting in contemporaneous Japanese art, see *Kiki no jidai to kaiga, 1930–1945 (Painting in Crisis, 1930–1945),* ed. Kenichirō Makino and Hidenobu Kujirai, partial trans. by Keiko Katsuya (Nagoya: Aichi Ken Bijutsukan, 1999).

14. Chang, "Deployments, Engagements, Obliterations," 118.

15. ShiPu Wang, "Japan against Japan: U.S. Propaganda and Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Identity Crisis," *American Art* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 35. doi: 10.1086/587915.

16. Frost, "Kuniyoshi, American of Two Decades," 25.

17. Harry Salpeter, "Yasuo Kuniyoshi: Artists' Artist," *Esquire* 7, no. 4 (April 1937): 113.

18. Anne Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race; Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), 73–74.

19. Miné Okubo, quoted in Deborah Gesensway and Mindy Roseman, *Beyond Words: Images from America's Concentration Camps* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), 74.

20. See Bert Winther-Tamaki, "Calligraphic & Metaphysical: Abstract Expressions," in *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989,* ed. Alexandra Munroe (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 145–57.

21. See Kanemitsu's comment in interview with Matsumi Kanemitsu by Marjorie J. Rogers, editor-interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program, (for Los Angeles Art Community: Group Portrait, tape II, side one, January 14, 1976, 67); online at Calisphere http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft729006sg&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=d0e141&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=calisphere&query=reinhardt.

22. Wechsler, *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions*, 75.

23. See William Hemmerdinger, *Matsumi Kanemitsu: Works in Black and White, 1958–1988* (Los Angeles: Japanese-American Cultural and Community Center, 1988).

24. Fujieda Teruo, "Maiku Kanemitsu ni tsuite no geijutsu-teki na omoide" in *Kanemitsu Matsumi* (National Museum of Art, Osaka, 1998), 5.

25. Kanemitsu in Paul Jenkins, Jules Langsner, and Kanemitsu Matsumi, "Gendai bijutsu: Amerika to Nihon o megutte, zadankai," *Mizue* 718 (December 1964): 12.

Chinese Painting Comes to America

Zhang Shuqi and the Diplomacy of Art

Gordon H. Chang

Discussions of cultural interactions between Asian countries and the United States often take fixed, unexamined categories, such as "East and West" or "Asian and Euro-American," as their starting point. The categories are sometimes thought of as opposed, with the Asian construed as traditional and unchanging and the Western as modern, dynamic, and international. Recent scholarship and thinking, however, suggests that these concepts and assumptions are problematic in considering artistic interchanges in the early twentieth century, if not earlier. We now understand that artistic exchanges across the Pacific have been more complicated, mutual, and interactive than previously assumed.

Consider the first identified artist of Chinese ancestry who worked in America. Lai Yong came from southern China to California sometime in the mid-nineteenth century. During the 1860 and 1870s, he enjoyed a successful career as a portrait artist and photographer in San Francisco, where leading members of the elite sat for his Western-style oil portraits. Members of the Chinese community also served as subjects of his photographic work, which was both compelling and sensitive in approach. Lai Yong spoke out against anti-Chinese prejudices of the day and was an early proponent of equality and civil rights. But where did he learn the craft of his art, which had no putative Oriental look? Most likely, he received his training from George Chinnery (1774–1852), a noted English artist who had settled in Hong Kong and Macao, or from Chinese artists whom Chinnery had influenced. Examples of Lai Yong's work survive, but the artist himself disappeared from San Francisco and from the historical record after 1882, the year Congress passed what is known as the Chinese Exclusion Act.[1]

1. Li Yishi, *Sketch of Zhang Shuqi*, 1930. Ink on paper, 12 × 8 in. Chang family collection.

This essay focuses on the life and career of Zhang Shuqi (1900–1957), one of the earliest Chinese artists to have had a direct impact on large American audiences and their understanding of Chinese brush painting.[2] Under the auspices of the Chinese government, Zhang traveled to the United States in 1941 to promote Sino-American understanding and friendship. He toured the country extensively over the next five years and held solo exhibitions at major museums, where he conducted public demonstrations of his technique. The popular and art press devoted great attention to these events, which attracted thousands of people. Before his arrival in the country, the Chinese government had presented one of the artist's large compositions to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. That gift also had received extensive media coverage, making it then, and perhaps even today, the most well-known Chinese painting in America.

For most Americans (and many Asians), Zhang's work appeared to be of a traditional Chinese idiom, but his training, technique, and approach to art was fully modern in China. It combined Western and Chinese features, and he thought of himself as both an international and Chinese artist. Though highly successful in China in the 1930s and 1940s, his subtle hybrid style and life overseas have complicated historical evaluation of Zhang (Figure 1) in China. In the United States, Zhang is not considered part of American art history at all. But for many in this country, it was Zhang Shuqi who brought Chinese painting to America. Zhang came to the United States to advance the Chinese government's practice of cultural diplomacy, reaching out to the West after Japan's invasion of China in 1937. I play with the word "diplomacy" to refer not just to the formal interaction of states but also to suggest informal artistic

interpolation and mixing; both definitions are useful to understand Zhang's work and possible influence. But it was also twentieth-century modernity that enabled Chinese painting to reach a mass audience in America. Chinese paintings, like other objects, had long been found in American homes and institutions, and a few Americans had even studied them, but Chinese painting as a process or method as well as something available to wide numbers of people was virtually unknown before the mid-twentieth century. World politics and changing technologies opened new possibilities of learning, influence, and exchange.

Chinese arts and crafts had come early to the attention of Americans. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many Americans, elite and the everyday, filled their homes with Chinese porcelains, decorative ware, furniture and the like. This *chinoiserie* was widely appreciated and admired, but it was not until 1838 that the American public could view Chinese paintings firsthand. In that year, Nathan Dunn, a Philadelphia merchant enriched by the early China trade, opened what became known as the Chinese Museum to the American public. According to one estimate, more than a 100,000 people toured Dunn's collection to view 1,200 objects he had acquired when he lived in China. These items ranged from natural history specimens to garments, tools, home wares, and fine paintings. Much impressed the crowds who visited: some paintings were huge, extending nine feet wide by five feet high. But the artwork left Dunn, a Sinophile, somewhat ambivalent. He wrote in the museum catalogue that the several hundred paintings in the show provided clear evidence of Chinese artistic ability, which was even better than many had thought. But though Chinese painters could render images with "great correctness and beauty," Dunn concluded that "shading," a staple of the Western Renaissance, was something "they do not well understand." For his path-breaking efforts, the American Philosophical Society bestowed on Dunn membership in its esteemed ranks.[3]

Dunn's museum remained open for three years in Philadelphia before he moved it to London. A few years later in 1847, John R. Peters, who had been a member of the first official American delegation to China, displayed his own Chinese art collection to the American public. It was even larger than Dunn's, with 500 paintings, including some in oil color depicting everyday life in China. Other paintings presented birds and flowers "exquisitely done." Overall, Peters was more diplomatic than Dunn in his catalogue's evaluation of the artwork. "All the paintings in the Museum," he wrote, "are the work of Chinese artists, and for execution and finish speak for themselves."[4]

By the late nineteenth century, important figures in America developed a critical appreciation of Chinese painting and arts more on their own terms. Wealthy collectors began to amass important holdings of high Chinese artwork—first porcelains

and then classical paintings, though little that was contemporary. Considerations of Chinese and Japanese artworks appeared in the paintings of such artists as John La Farge, James McNeill Whistler, and the European Impressionists. As historian Warren I. Cohen has noted, "East Asian art became intertwined with modernism, with avant-garde Western painting. Each prepared the way for the other."[5]

In China, a few artists from Europe had had a small presence in court arts going back at least to the sixteenth century, but they little influenced the embedded tradition until the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then the challenge of the West threw everything into chaos in China. Many political reformers came to believe that Westernization, including in the arts, would be critical for China's salvation and future. Art students were sent abroad to Japan and Europe to bring back the new learning. In contrast to Europe, where realism came increasingly under fire, academic realism, Post-Impressionism, and other schools were considered to be modern in China. One of the leading apostles of the new art training in China was Liu Haisu, who styled himself as the Chinese Vincent Van Gogh. Liu founded the Shanghai Art Academy, the first fine arts college of modern China. It taught Western art techniques exclusively; no training in Chinese ink painting was even offered in its first years.[6]

Zhang Shuqi was born into this crucible of political and artistic ferment in 1900, which was also the year of the Boxer anti-foreign uprising. His birthplace in Pujiang County, Zhejiang Province, was near the art centers of Hangzhou and Shanghai. As a precocious youngster, he displayed a creative talent that impressed his artist relatives. But his first formal training came at Liu Haisu's Shanghai academy, which he entered in 1921 as one of its earliest students. His instruction was in Western techniques. "I painted day and night," he recalled, "I learned oil, water color, and charcoal. I got the foundation of painting from that school." Zhang largely trained himself, however, in techniques of Chinese brush painting and the well-established Chinese genre of birds and flowers, for which he later became most well known.[7]

After graduation, Zhang became a practicing artist and instructor, and he taught brush painting at various schools in China, including 10 years beginning in 1930 at the National Central University in Nanjing, then the national capital. The dean of the art department, Li Yishi (1886–1942), a European-trained oil painter, completed a quick sketch of Zhang one day (see Figure 1) that captures the likeness of the young artist. But it also reflects the then-dominant Western-influenced artistic temperament at that important institution through its suggestions of direct observation of the model and use of shading to create an impression of three-dimensionality. (Zhang's inscription on the sketch, added in 1952, reads in part, "In the fall of that year, on a fine day with clear sky and crisp air, Mr. Li invited me to go to Jiming Temple [Cry of

2. Zhang Shuqi, *Messengers of Peace* (also known as *A Hundred Doves*), 1940. Ink and color on silk mounted on paper, 64 × 140 in. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, NY.

the Cock] for tea and a chat. Mr. Li drew this portrait of me . . . and captured me not only in appearance but also in spirit in just a few minutes.")

Zhang and his contemporaries responded to China's political and cultural crisis in different ways. Some, such as Liu Haisu and Li Yishi, embraced Western oil painting; others such as Zhang sought to invigorate traditional Chinese painting and develop an updated, distinctive national style. His friends and associates came to include such leading artists as Fu Baoshi, Xu Beihong, Pan Tianshou, Wu Fuzhi, Zhao Shao'ang, Qi Baishi, Gao Jianfu, and Zhang Daqian. Zhang mastered the use of the Chinese brush but applied its use in compositions that reflected his Western art study. To the eyes of most contemporary observers, his work, employing the so-called boneless style of freehand ink painting technique, fell clearly in the tradition of nineteenth-century Chinese ink painters such as Ren Bonian and Wu Changshuo. At the same time, the influence of his foundation in Western techniques is clearly visible, and Chinese art commentators would sometimes compare Zhang to Van Gogh, Jean Francois Millet, and other European artists.[8]

Zhang's career developed rapidly in the 1930s, with his work included in exhibitions of contemporary Chinese painting that traveled to Paris, Berlin, and Moscow.[9] His painting also came to the attention of Chinese political elites (both Communist and Nationalist), and in 1940 the Ministry of Education asked him to complete a large composition for the occasion of Roosevelt's election to a third presidential term. As Japanese bombs fell on Chongqing, the wartime capital and Zhang's new residence, he completed his monumental *Messengers of Peace*, also known as *A Hundred Doves* (Figure 2). The president of the relocated National Central University, Luo Jialun, and the Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek added inscriptions. A few days before

Christmas 1940, Zhang formally presented the painting to the United States ambassador to China, Nelson T. Johnson, who forwarded it to the White House.

The painting was a good choice: it appeared to be within Chinese tradition but would appeal to American audiences. The rendering of the birds was realistic and lively, the color vibrant, and the brush strokes bold and energetic. The composition contained a Western perspective, which Johnson, a leading China specialist, specifically noted in his cover letter to Roosevelt. Conveying the sentiment as well as the energy of the painting, Johnson reported that the artist "desired to make a picture which would be symbolic of the position which the President of the United States holds in the present world situation and after choosing the dove spent three weeks working out the composition." Johnson explained: "Then in one day he painted the first fifty doves. Later others were added until he had painted 97. The last three added to make up the hundred are the dove at the extreme left, the white one in the center and the one faintly seen at the far distance coming from behind the foliage." For this painting, Zhang used gouache as well as Chinese wet colors, as he regularly did in his work.[10]

Messengers of Peace was said to have graced the White House after its acceptance, and it later was displayed in the exhibition hall of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York, where it is now permanently held. The Ferargil Galleries in New York City exhibited it in 1942. Numerous newspapers, books, and periodicals reproduced the image, which became famous in the United States; to this day it is also celebrated in China.[11]

Zhang followed the painting to the United States, arriving in the fall of 1941. Traveling on a diplomatic passport with Chinese government financial support, he was presented as China's "ambassador of art and goodwill." His mission was to introduce Chinese culture to the American people and promote friendship in what quickly became a common cause after Japan's December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor. Unable to return to China, Zhang spent the next five years in the United States frenetically advancing cultural diplomacy.

He had brought 400 of his own paintings with him, but also continued to paint actively in America. He sold many of his works and participated in events to raise money for United China Relief, the non-government organization that rallied Americans to support the Chinese people during the war. Zhang participated in group shows of contemporary Chinese painting, such as a 1943 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. And he held numerous large one-artist shows in museums throughout the country, including several at the de Young in San Francisco, the Seattle Art Museum, the Chicago Art Institute, the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of

Art, and the Ontario Museum in Toronto. He exhibited at galleries and gave talks at clubs, civic organizations, and universities from Portland to Chicago to Washington, DC. Museums and collectors, such as Henry Luce, purchased his paintings. The writers Pearl Buck and Lin Yutang, the philosopher Hu Shih, and other specialists in Chinese life and culture in America admired his work. At his shows, his public demonstrations of his painting attracted large audiences of spectators who saw for the first time what Chinese brush painting was all about. Zhang returned to China after the end of World War II and then came back to the United States in 1949. He opened a studio a block away from the California College of Arts and Crafts and resided in the Oakland hills until his early death in 1957.[12]

Space does not allow a full discussion of Zhang Shuqi's work as it evolved in the conditions of life in the United States other than to present a few observations. Zhang was a serious artist who constantly studied both Chinese and Western art texts and paintings. Sometime in the early 1940s when he was in America, for example, he explored using black paper and board, which was highly unusual in the Chinese art tradition. Some of the resulting images seemed to invoke the work of John La Farge from the 1860s. La Farge had completed a composition of a water lily against a dark background after studying Japanese brush painting, and he might have inspired Zhang, who completed a similar composition and then reproduced it as a widely circulated note card in the 1940s. In China, Zhang had also become known for his "whiteism," the liberal use of white pigment, which was untraditional in Chinese painting, and he continued using white ink for his painting and even calligraphy, recalling Mark Tobey's "white writing."[13] One also wonders about possible conversations between the work of Morris Graves and Chinese bird-and-flower artists such as Zhang. In the early 1940s, Zhang exhibited his pictures and performed demonstrations of his technique at the Seattle Art Museum, which purchased his paintings for its collection and where Graves worked for a time.

Zhang never broke with representational painting—he was technically so skillful with the Chinese brush and steeped in Chinese naturalism that Western notions of abstraction never persuaded him to abandon his approach. But his work clearly evolved in the United States, and we can only speculate as to the influences that played on him.

Take, for example, one of his compositions completed on a screen, one of the traditional supports for Chinese painting (Figure 3). Brightly colored sunflowers evoke Van Gogh, of course, but Zhang also employs the vigorous use of black ink calligraphic brush strokes. The rendering of the flowers, in contrast, is accomplished

3. Zhang Shuqi, *Sunflowers*, 1952. Chang family collection.

with thick, layered pigment that may recall the impasto of western oil paints. He completed this in the United States and certainly intended it to stay in America. Other works display what he considered to be the hallmark of Chinese artwork, "rhythmic vitality" or *sheng dong*, but perhaps with even greater force, color, and abstraction than what he completed in China. He experimented with new ways to apply his paints, such as the use of kitchen and natural sponges. He sketched with ink pens and wax crayons. He worked on American watercolor cardboard, cut in dimensions for Western wood framing. He even painted on ceramics, such as tiles and lamp stands. We also see a move toward simplification, an effort to find essential formal elements, and new subject matter from the California natural and physical landscape, which he loved. He added California quail, redwood trees, and Sierra pines (Figure 4), along with Yosemite and Carmel, to his expanding subject repertoire.[14]

Although Zhang considered himself to be in the tradition of Chinese classical masters, he fully embraced modern technologies of reproduction and publicity. In China, he had produced note cards of his work, indicating his appreciation of the commercial potential that machine printing offered. Stranded in the United States during the war, he took the opportunity to start a business on a larger scale. He reproduced his work as fine stationery, lithographs, note cards, Christmas cards, and even as decorative items such as wallpaper, placemats, and tallies for scoring the card game of bridge (which obsessed him), as well as table napkins and paper table cover-

4. Zhang Shuqi, *Lone Cypress*, ca. 1955. Chang family collection.

ings. These reproductions sold well throughout the country and internationally, in curio stores and in fine homeware emporiums. They were marketed from the 1940s through the 1970s, circulating to tens of thousands of consumers. Zhang also authored a richly illustrated book that offered instruction on Chinese painting and its techniques, including brush use and composition. Viking Press published an English translation of the book in 1960 under the title *Painting in the Chinese Manner*, recognizing that it was one of the first treatises on Chinese painting in America by an actual practitioner of the art form.[15]

Another modern dimension of the presentation of his art was the live demonstration. It is unclear when Chinese painters began to offer these performances, which became more common in the latter half of the twentieth century, but we know that Liu Haisu gave public demonstrations when he toured Europe in the 1930s.[16] Within China, there was no tradition of painting in public. Live demonstrations were completely unknown, though when artists socialized they could paint with one another in friendship, often collaborating on compositions over wine or a repast. Zhang himself did so in his own homes. But in the United States, Zhang quickly added personal appearances and painting demonstrations to his exhibitions. Widely advertised, these events attracted great crowds who watched in rapt and astonished attention as he produced complicated compositions within a matter of minutes.

ART

CHINESE PAINTING

Professor Chang shows how he does it in eight minutes flat

The pictures on these pages were posed specially for LIFE by one of China's greatest painters, Professor Chang Shu-Chi of the National Central University of Chungking. Here he shows how he turns out one of his Chinese masterpieces in exactly eight minutes. In picture below he starts the painting at 3:20. At right he holds finished painting at 3:28.

Speed is only part of Artist Chang's technique. It took him 21 years to perfect his art to the point where every brush stroke is a vitally important step toward building a finished painting. Because these pictures are painted on silk with watercolor and lines cannot be erased, the greatest problem is to see that every minute stroke is done just right. If one little brush line goes wrong the whole picture is ruined and must be begun all over again.

Chang Shu-Chi is now in the U.S. to raise money with his pictures for China Relief. To date he has sold more than $15,000 worth of paintings like the one on this page, at prices ranging from $25 to $500.

START Exactly at 3:20 (*note clock*) artist wets brush with right amount of water, begins painting.

Finished picture of birds on a branch of wisteria is shown completed by Professor Chang Shu-Chi exactly eight minutes after he began it. Chang first started painting at age of 9. Now at 40 he is one of China's most honored artists.

1 MINUTE With movements so fast camera does not clearly show hand, birds begin to appear.

2 MINUTES The birds now are all done and the artist begins swift painting of wisteria.

3 MINUTES Artist picks up fresh brush to paint green leaves to contrast with blossoms.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE 65

Chinese Painting (continued)

4 MINUTES Still another brush is used to paint branches beneath the birds. Claws of birds have already been drawn to clutch the branch.

5 MINUTES Deep tones are added to blossoms to give them variety of color and feeling of sunlight. The cups hold water to moisten brushes.

FINISH In the last three minutes Artist Chang adds a few final strokes, then takes up a heavier brush to write his signature in Chinese characters.

5. "Chinese Painting: Professor Chang shows how he does it in eight minutes flat," *Life* magazine, 15 March 1943, 65–66.

They were performances in every sense of the word with expectant and hushed audiences, a stage (the painting table), a charismatic figure who spoke in English with an unfamiliar inflection, and action that could not be recaptured. Art became a moment and movement, not just an object. Zhang became known for his extraordinary technical skill and speed, which *Life* magazine featured in a 1943 article about him (Figure 5), complete with photos of his minute-by-minute progress on a painting as a clock indicated the passing time. As the title of the *Life* photo spread declared, "Chinese Painting: Professor Chang shows how he does it in eight minutes flat." Technical speed impressed the magazine's editors, in good American style, but they were oblivious to the creative and expressive possibilities of the rapid strokes that many traditionally appreciated in Chinese painting.[17]

Many things intrigued his American audiences at the demonstrations, including his unusual handling of materials, especially the brush, the application of paints, and his composition. Zhang's rendering of simple scenes of natural beauty captivated; his birds and flowers created an "alternative reality" to the stresses of war and

of daily life.[18] But there was something more, which critical observers at the time noted, implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, contrasting his work with traditional Western approaches to painting. This was the ability of the art to capture expressive gesture resulting from the interplay of trained, physical effort and contingency. Here is what Alfred Frankenstein, the well-known art critic of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, wrote in 1943 after attending one of these demonstrations:

> *Watching Chang at work is like hearing [Jascha] Heifetz play the fiddle; i.e., the results of the virtuosity are directly and immediately apparent as they seldom are in watching a Western painter at his easel. The parallel goes further in that, with Chang, one has a sense of manual dexterity trained to the last degree of subtle muscular control. He has a spiccato and a legato, he has mastered harmonics in double stops, and the right and left hand pizzicato as well. Furthermore a painting by Chang is and has to be a one-sitting performance. He can no more stop and knock off and come back than Heifetz can stop and knock off while playing the Brahms concerto in public. He works very wet, and he works entirely without model, drawing a vast stock of motifs out of memorized observation and tradition. And until you see him you do not know what a subtle, plastic and varied instrument a Chinese brush can be.*[19]

Other writers also spoke of Zhang's performances as magical and full of spirit, spontaneity, and quiet emotion. The San Francisco artist and writer John Garth witnessed Zhang at the de Young Museum and emphasized the fluid physicality of his act of painting: "The way in which Professor Chang moves his brush through its series of graceful curves, swirls and touches as the painting steadily evolves beneath his handsome hand reminds the watcher, oddly enough, of the apparent free but exactly controlled execution of a difficult dance routine by some master or mistress of the classic ballet." In a dig at some of his fellow American artists, Garth also complimented Zhang for his "calm grace of execution unknown to the western modern, who nowadays appears always to have tortured the paint on to his canvas in a frantic agony of spiritual doubt and indecision."[20]

As the *Life* photo-essay suggests, there is another technology of dissemination that we need to consider: the technology of filmic production—that is, still and moving photography. Zhang was keen on both. In China, he used photos to record his work for his own reference and for publicity. He had individual pieces photographed, as well as his exhibitions and even his gifting of *Messengers of Peace*. He understood the power of promotion and employed professional photographers to record his time in the United States and create portfolios of himself and his performances (Figure 6). In these

6. Zhang Shuqi presents a live demonstration of his painting technique in Chicago, 1943. Zhang Shuqi Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, California.

portraits, he could be the gowned master draped in the silk of a Chinese scholar with brush in hand, or the modern international celebrity sporting a sharp, tailored wool suit, with tie, wingtips, and a casually held cigarette.

In the 1940s his work became the subject of motion picture documentaries, early examples of films showing an artist at work. His unfamiliar style, still exotic for American audiences, and his ability to paint in an energetic and intriguing way were perfect for the motion picture. Through these captivating documentaries, we can still see Zhang at work today, somewhat as his museum demonstration audiences did more than 60 years ago.

One of these films was made in 1943, a joint production of the Harmon Foundation, which is best known for supporting African American artists, and the China Institute in America, an organization that promoted the understanding of Chinese culture. American philosopher-educator John Dewey and Hu Shih, the famous Chinese intellectual, helped found the Institute in New York in 1926. The film's producer was Wango Weng, an art scholar and connoisseur who also narrated the documentary.[21] Several things about the film stand out. One is its use of Zhang's art as a way of introducing Chinese painting to an uninitiated, general American audience. In attempting to instruct, it focuses on matters that were unusual to audiences at the time: the rhythmic power of Chinese brush strokes, the effort to present nature

from the mind and not from an established model, the rigorous training, and the idea of temporality in the act of painting. The film, which shows Zhang painting and completing compositions, introduces the viewer to central elements of Chinese artistic production: the sequence of brush strokes, their irretrievability, their interconnectedness and contingency, and the stylized representation of an identifiable subject. Within minutes, Zhang transforms a blank void into a virtual reality of flowers, leaves, birds, insects, and colors, visualizing a moment in imagined time. The narrator has to remind an incredulous viewer that the act of creation was occurring in "real time," not edited or mechanically quickened visually.[22]

Zhang could be presented as the prototypical Chinese artist carrying on some timeless tradition, but his actual work was a subtle interpolation within strongly held cultural assumptions. His own identity when he was alive was elusive and not transparent. Today it is still a challenge to attempt to interpret his life and work. Zhang helped to bring Chinese painting to America. He brought not just paintings as objects—which museums had long held, elite patrons admired, and scholars had studied. Under the exigencies of global conflict, he brought Chinese painting as event, as activity, and as something accessible to a broad spectrum of Americans. Technologies, market conditions, and international politics created the occasion. Artistic currents in America soon came to embrace their own versions of the gesture, the spontaneous, and the display of psychic energy. Zhang's personal style of art fit the times and opportunities.

Zhang was unique, but he was also representative. As with many of his Chinese contemporaries, he sought to reinvigorate Chinese painting while also wanting to make an impact on America and advance the internationalization of art. In China, the line between the intellectual and artistic world, on the one hand, and the political world, on the other, has been more permeable than in the West. Zhang's career was similar: his art and activity in America complemented political diplomacy to be sure, but he also helped to negotiate new, more porous boundaries between art in China and America. His was also a "diplomacy of art."

In international relations, "diplomacy" broadly refers to the formal interaction of states, while the term "art of diplomacy" honors the creative effort required to move beyond established positions and to forge new relationships. And so it is with the "diplomacy of art." Within the world of art, references are made to media, to various ways to present and articulate. But art is itself a medium, a platform that can serve to advance dialogue across various sorts of boundaries rooted in traditions, beliefs, social practices, geographies, times, and values. Art is an avenue of cultural exchange and interaction. And specific works of art can themselves embody those very conversations, with the creation of the new, unexpected, and arresting.

Zhang hoped to see the end of the East–West artistic divide, a trope that dominated the world he inhabited, and he was encouraged by the warm reception he received here and the art that he saw in America. Artists from Asia were learning from the West, he observed in the 1940s, and "occidental artists are beginning to pay attention to design by the mind much more than before"—something he believed Chinese artists had done all along. All this inspired him to "foretell a union between the East and the West." He took pride in his contributions to East–West artistic interaction and the diplomacy of art.[23]

Notes

1. For new perspectives on East–West artistic interaction, see Gordon H. Chang, Mark Dean Johnson, and Paul J. Karlstrom, eds., *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008); Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009); and Jeffrey Wechsler, ed., *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997). On Lai Yong, see Chang, et al., *Asian American Art*, 469–79.

2. The author of this essay is the son of the artist and draws from personal papers in the family collection for some of the source material. Zhang Shuqi's name is also rendered as Shu-chi Chang, which is how he was commonly known in America during his lifetime. The Hoover Institution Archives holds the Zhang Shuqi papers.

3. See Warren I. Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture: A Study in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 1–11, 30–32; Nathan Dunn, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Collection in Philadelphia: With Miscellaneous Remarks Upon the Manners, Customs, Trade, and Government of the Celestial Empire* (Philadelphia, 1839), 77; and Jonathan Goldstein, *Philadelphia and the China Trade, 1682–1846: Commercial, Cultural, and Attitudinal Effects* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), 74, 77–79. In 1832, Dunn also constructed a manor on his New Jersey estate with Chinese architectural motifs, a practice common among the elite in these years. The structure still stands in Mt. Holly.

4. John R. Peters Jr., *Miscellaneous Remarks upon the Government, History, Religions, Literature, Agriculture, Arts, Trades, Manners, and Customs of the Chinese: As suggested by an examination of the articles comprising the Chinese Museum* (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber & Co., 1847), quotes at 192–93.

5. Cohen, *East Asian Art*, 31.

6. Most scholarship on Liu Haisu is unavailable in English, but images and basic biographies may be found online. In Shanghai, the Liu Haisu Art Museum was opened in 1995 to house works he donated and to display modern Chinese art.

7. Zhang Shuqi, "The Story of My Painting Life," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1944, Chang Family collection.

8. See *Yifeng* (Art Wind) 3, no. 11 (1935). The entire issue is devoted to Zhang's work.

9. Julia F. Andrews and Kuiyi Shen, eds. *Chinese Painting on the Eve of the Communist Revolution: Chang Shu-chi and his Collection* (Stanford, CA: Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, 2006), 5–6.

10. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum holds documentation related to the gifting of the painting and some of its subsequent history in the Roosevelt administration. See Wendell A. Parks to Gordon H. Chang, November 13, 1997. Johnson to Franklin D. Roosevelt, December 24,1940. Chang Family collection.

11. See, for example, *Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe* [Shanghai People's Fine Art Publishing House], *Zhang Shuqi baigetu* ['Zhang Shuqi's One Hundred doves'] (Shanghai, 1997); and Hong Tuan, *Zhang Shuqi* (Hubei: Hubei meishu chubanshe [Hubei Fine Arts Publishing House], 2005).

12. *An Exhibition of Modern Chinese Paintings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1943), with introductions by Hu Shih, Kinn-Wei Shaw, Lin Yutang, and Alan Priest.

13. The La Farge painting is *The Last Waterlilies*, an 1862 oil in the collection of the Colby College Museum of Art. In 1932, Zhang and four Chinese artist friends founded the *Baishe* (White Society), which explored the use of white in painting.

14. Zhang also became active in American professional circles, including the Western Society of Artists. In 1956, he won the top award in its annual competition. He was a member of the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley.

15. Shu-chi Chang, *Painting in the Chinese Manner* (New York: Viking Press, 1960). In the book, Zhang devotes most attention to what can be called the techniques and formal qualities of Chinese painting rather than its philosophy and aesthetics. He wrote the book in Chinese, with the Chinese title "Shuqi's painting method." It was translated by his wife, who provided the English title.

16. *The Studio*, vol. 109 (1935): 50, includes a photograph of Liu Haisu painting in public at the New Burlington Galleries in London. It accompanies an article by him entitled "Aims of the Chinese Painters."

17. "Chinese Painting: Professor Chang shows how he does it in eight minutes flat," *Life*, 15 March 1943, 65–66. The ideal of speed in Chinese painting is discussed in James Cahill, "Quickness and Spontaneity in Chinese Painting: The Ups and Downs of an Ideal," in his *Three Alternative Histories of Chinese Painting* (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1988), 70–99.

18. On "alternative realities," see Richard Vinograd, "Temporalities in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Painting," in Andrews and Shen, eds., *Chinese Painting*, 1–2.

19. Alfred Frankenstein "The Chinese Send Us Chang Shu-chi," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 14 November 1943, "This World," 12.

20. John Garth, "The Art World," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 November 1943. Among the other Asia-trained artists who came to the United States in the first half of the twentieth century are Chiura Obata, Chiang Yee, Dong Kingman, and Paul Horiuchi. Zhang was especially close to Chiang Yee, another pioneer in introducing Chinese arts to America.

21. In 2007, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston presented an exhibition of the Weng family's painting collection, *Through Six Generations: The Weng Collection of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy*. At least one other film showing Zhang painting was made, "A Chinese Artist: The Method and Technique of Chang Shu-chi"; it was produced by Leslie P. Thatcher for the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology in 1942.

22. A portion of this 10-minute-long film may be found at www.americanart.si.edu/research/symposia/2009/webcast/.

23. Zhang Shuqi, "On Occidental and Oriental Painting," unpublished manuscript, ca. 1943, Chang Family collection.

New Negro on the Pacific Rim

Sargent Johnson's Afro-Asian Sculptures

John P. Bowles

Between 1923 and 1925, Sargent Johnson (1887–1967) created a porcelain portrait of his infant daughter Pearl that alludes to Chinese Buddhist sculpture (Figure 1). When Johnson exhibited *Pearl* and two drawings in the Harmon Foundation's 1933 "Exhibition of Productions by Negro Artists" in New York, he was awarded the prize for "Most Outstanding Work in [the] Exhibit."[1] Despite this early attention, *Pearl*—along with his other sculptures incorporating Asian subject matter or stylistic references—has been ignored by art historians, who have privileged those works in Johnson's oeuvre that resemble African art, such as his hammered-copper masks of the 1930s.[2]

For much of his lifetime, however, Johnson was best-known for the prize-winning sculptures of children he made between 1923 and 1935 (Figure 2). These works incorporate a diverse array of stylistic references ranging from ancient Egypt, Rome, and Quattrocento Florence to West Africa, China, and India. A decade later, in a 1944 scholarship application to visit Mexico, Johnson emphasized the eclecticism of his art, noting that he was especially interested in the sculpture of "the great cultures of Egypt, Greece, the Orient, the Middle Ages and primitive societies."[3] Despite scholars' subsequent emphasis on African and African American aspects of Johnson's sculpture, much of his professional success derived from the genuinely multicultural variety of his art and the different interpretations that this multiculturalism elicited.

Johnson's success may have depended upon his ability to construct two distinct, but mutually reinforcing, professional identities, comfortably occupying a place among California transnational modernists as well as a role within the national New Negro movement.[4] His interest in art from around the

1. Sargent Johnson, *Pearl*, 1923–25. Stoneware with glaze. Location unknown. Black-and-white photograph by James Latimer Allen, published as the frontispiece in *Exhibition of Work by Negro Artists* (New York: Harmon Foundation, Inc., 1933).

world, including the arts of Asia, West Africa, modern Mexico, Pre-Columbian Latin America, and ancient Greece and Egypt, provided Johnson with a way to participate in the local San Francisco art scene and its discourse of multicultural modernism without being pigeonholed as a Negro artist. At the same time, Johnson's interest in African art could be singled out as a sign of his solidarity with the anti-racist, anti-colonial, democratic cultural nationalism of Alain Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, and other African American leaders. This strategy appears to have enabled Johnson to establish a strong reputation in the Bay Area despite the "color line" that sundered America so strikingly in the early twentieth century.

Johnson moved to the Bay Area in 1915, a time when artists and civic leaders alike represented the region as modern America's cultural and economic interface with Asia; this was considered an important part of what made the Bay Area cosmopolitan. Contemporary business and civic leaders touted the Bay Area as the U.S. gateway to the Pacific Basin, book-ending the era with a pair of grandiose world's fairs to assert their claims. The Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915 commemorated the opening of the Panama Canal and represented San Francisco as a capital city of the Pacific Rim; and the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939 hailed San Francisco as the western states' gateway to the Pacific with architecture and monumental sculptures—some by Johnson—orchestrated to create the impression of a "Pacific Empire."[5] Between the fairs, San Francisco sculptors responded to the region's boosters. Finding themselves bound by no single artistic tradition, they sometimes referred to themselves as "California artists"—an identity suggesting distance and independence from art circles on the East Coast and an affinity for the arts of Pacific Rim nations.[6] Civic leaders regarded San Francisco as a liberal and welcoming city, free from the racism they saw elsewhere. Likewise, the San Francisco Art Association could sometimes point with self-contentment to the active role

Chinese and Japanese artists took in local exhibitions, disregarding the racism and anti-immigrant sentiment they faced regularly in the Bay Area.[7]

It was in this context that Johnson made several sculptures between 1923 and 1935 that articulate a relationship with cultures of the Pacific Rim, giving form to New Negro cosmopolitanism on a local stage that was also already self-consciously transnational. Johnson's Orientalist and Africanist allusions situate him in the Bay Area, looking east to Africa, south to Latin America, and west through the Golden Gate and across the Pacific to Asia.

2. Sargent Johnson, *Elizabeth Gee*, 1927. Stoneware with glaze on wood stand, 13 1/8 × 10 3/4 × 7 1/2 in. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Albert M. Bender Collection, Gift of Albert M. Bender.

For *Pearl*, the portrait of his daughter, Johnson incorporated references to traditional Buddhist iconography as well as his own multicultural community in the Bay Area. He sculpted his daughter in porcelain glazed blue-green—a medium that would have been associated with Asian ceramics—and gave her a contemporary hairstyle popular in both Asian and European American communities. He also portrayed her in a relaxed pose that is both childlike and suggestive of the royal ease reserved for only the highest order of Buddhist deities and royalty. He placed Pearl atop a throne, evoking a motif found in representations of the Buddha throughout Asia. Johnson may have thought he was representing the Buddha, but, in fact, the baby Buddha is typically not seated (the *sutras* say he stood up immediately) or chubby. There is, however, a tradition of child deities, particularly of young pilgrims that become deified figures. A lotus-flower motif of the artist's own design ornaments the base, perhaps also referring to Egyptian art, as Aaron Douglas would do with stylized papyrus blossoms in his illustrations of 1926 and later. But the lotus blossoms in *Pearl* might also represent Johnson's Orientalist allusion to a popular and auspicious Buddhist image: pure, newly born souls, represented in the form of babies, each seated on his or her own lotus-flower throne to hear the Buddha preach.[8]

Pearl is not only an intimate portrait of the artist's own baby; it is also an invention, a figure for Johnson's imagined relationship to China, India, and Japan. It

is not Buddhist but a Buddhist-inspired figure that counters stereotypical representations of African Americans in mainstream culture. In the early decades of the twentieth century, when Johnson was emerging as an active participant in the New Negro renaissance, Locke, Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and other African American political leaders found deep affinities between the fight against racism in the United States and the nationalist, anti-colonial movements in India and China and, even, at times, with Japanese imperialism and self-determination.[9] Only two years after Johnson first exhibited *Pearl*, Du Bois reimagined racial identification in his novel *Dark Princess* in a strikingly similar way. The book figures the salvation of "the darker peoples of the world" as a baby born to an African American father and a princess from a fictitious kingdom in India.[10] In Du Bois's novel, transnational solidarity among anti-racist activists, figured literally in terms of race-mixing, threatens to render racial distinctions obsolete while giving birth to a new generation who will continue the struggle for global cultural democracy. Johnson's sculpture is less polemical but perhaps no less optimistic.

Considered in more local terms, *Pearl* and some of Johnson's other sculptures, through the metaphor of innocent children, established the artist's place in a diverse community and provided evidence of a cosmopolitan future. Only one of Johnson's portraits of children, *Elizabeth Gee* (Figure 2), represents an Asian resident of his multi-ethnic Berkeley neighborhood, but at least two, *Pearl* and *Head of a Boy*, clearly incorporate Asian motifs, as do some of his other sculptures of the 1930s. The tender realism of Johnson's portraits bespeaks an intimacy between the artist and his subjects in a multicultural neighborhood. When Johnson made these small sculptures, he had moved across the San Francisco Bay with his family to a house he purchased near San Pablo Park, in a Berkeley neighborhood that was attracting many middle-class African American families. The area was already home to a large Japanese community as well as many European immigrants and some ethnic Chinese. Johnson's home was four blocks from the local Japanese Buddhist temple, and neighborhood children attended fully integrated public schools.[11] *Elizabeth Gee*, made between 1925 and 1927, is a portrait of Pearl's playmate, a Chinese American girl who lived only a block from the Johnsons, who has since described the San Pablo Park neighborhood as "a racial oasis in a desert of discrimination" during the 1920s and 1930s.[12]

Elizabeth Gee, both Asian-inflected and intimate, is a sensitive rendering done in a realist style. But do *Pearl* and *Elizabeth Gee* represent a cosmopolitan New Negro consciousness or merely a fashionable taste for Asian ceramics, symbols, and hairstyles? *Chester* (Figure 3), Johnson's portrait sculpture of the early 1930s, most often characterized as illustrating the artist's interest in representing "the pure American

Negro," provides a helpful model for understanding his clear allusions to Asian art in other sculptures made at approximately the same time.[13] *Chester* is Africanist in the same way that *Pearl* and *Elizabeth Gee* are Orientalist, evoking a romanticized, idealized, and distant culture in order to reflect critically upon the contemporary moment. The sculpture appears to be a portrait of an African American boy, rendered realistically but with an elegant simplicity betraying Johnson's modernist archaism. Johnson's only published statement about *Chester* identifies it simply as being modeled on "That kid [who] used to come to my studio."[14] Like *Pearl* and *Elizabeth Gee*, *Chester* represents one more child from Johnson's Berkeley neighborhood through a multicultural amalgamation of hybrid sculptural forms.[15]

3. Sargent Johnson, *Chester*, 1931. Cast terra cotta on wood base, 8 ½ × 5 ½ × 7 in. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Albert M. Bender Collection, Bequest of Albert M. Bender.

Seeing *Chester* in 1931, Alain Locke recognized the sculpture's cosmopolitanism and proclaimed Johnson one of the leading New Negro "Africanists," or Neo-Primitives. In two articles that year, "The African Legacy and the Negro Artist" and "The American Negro as Artist," Locke argued for the important lessons "Negro artists" could draw from African art, and he singled out Johnson for praise: compared with the work of other New Negro artists, the "stylistic analogies" Johnson drew in *Chester* were the "most direct of all."[16] "It is a long stretch from an isolated Negro sculptor living and working in California to the classic antiques of bygone African cultures," Locke wrote, "but here it is in this captivatingly naïve bust for those to see for whom only seeing is believing."[17] In Locke's description, Johnson's *Chester* figures an imagined identification with Africa at the same time that it marks the distances imposed by history and geography: *Chester* epitomizes the New Negro self-conception.

In the mid- to late 1920s, when Locke first made his case for the New Negro's interest in African art, he characterized the New Negro perspective in a phrase familiar from his description of Johnson's attitude toward Africa: African art, Locke wrote, "may seem a far cry from the conditions and moods of modern New York and Chicago and the Negro's rapid and feverish assimilation of all things American. But art establishes its contacts in strange ways." In this passage, Locke positioned African art in contrast to "assimilation of all things American," providing evidence of a Negro "folk temperament" as a tradition of cultural resistance.[18]

As a consequence, Locke characterized New Negro art not through any particular formal concerns but according to a new self-reflexive and critical "point of view" on history, by the clear recognition that "the Negro's situation in the past has forced him to a counter-attitude in life and a spectator's attitude toward himself."[19] The American Negro tradition was a set of strategies for adaptation and accommodation, manifest in cultural pluralism.[20] For Locke, Johnson's allusions to African art are significant not because they resurrect a forgotten inheritance but because Johnson's modernist practice poses the New Negro's relationship to Africa as a question of historical distance. In *Chester*, the seemingly natural affinities between what Locke identifies as an African precedent and a New Negro subject articulates a deliberate goal of multicultural solidarity. Most important for Locke is Johnson's engagement in a critical reappropriation of African art—the cultural product of a conventionally marginalized "classic" civilization—with the specific purpose of articulating an alternative perspective on history.[21] In short, Johnson's portrait sculptures of the 1920s and 1930s measure cultural difference, a core value of Locke's cultural politics, figuring the Negro's new critical role in the culture of the United States and the world.

Johnson's multicultural perspective is characteristic of Locke's New Negro project, but he also shared it with his teachers and colleagues in San Francisco, almost none of whom were African American. The depth of Johnson's interest in African art seems to have been unique among San Francisco artists, although it would most likely not have struck his contemporaries as out of the ordinary. In the spirit of cultural democracy, local artists were respected—if sometimes also marginalized—for articulating their ethnic heritage in their art. For example, when Diego Rivera visited San Francisco from 1930 to 1931, he painted local subjects in a style that was understood to express his perspective as a Mexican artist. During that same visit, when Rivera spoke to a meeting of the Chinese Art Club of California, a group comprising Chinese students at the California School of Fine Arts, he advised them "not to imitate American or European art but to cling to [y]our own Chinese art." Furthermore, during his visit Rivera was a member of the jury that

awarded the Medal of First Award for Sculpture in the San Francisco Art Association's 1931 annual exhibition to Johnson's *Chester*.[22] Rivera's impressions of Johnson's work are not recorded, but it is possible he saw in it the same thing Locke had only months earlier: an informed engagement with African art from the perspective of a modern Negro living and working in California. Other members of the San Francisco Art Association may have agreed, but it is notable that in the extensive press coverage of the annual exhibition that year some journalists cited Johnson's local renown—he was clearly accepted among the local community of artists—but not a single author identified Johnson as Negro or commented that *Chester* appeared to be inspired by African art. Scholar Helen Shannon has demonstrated that Johnson must have been familiar with the Egyptian "reserve heads" (life-sized funerary portrait head sculptures from Egypt's fourth dynasty) that likely inspired *Chester*. It is not certain, however, that many people in the San Francisco art community would have recognized these sources. Even Locke does not seem to have noticed the similarity. Instead, local viewers focused on the realism of the work, perhaps thinking of it in terms of the more academic sculptures, such as *Esther* and *Anderson*, that Johnson made between 1929 and 1930.[23]

Another possibility is that *Chester*'s simplified yet delicately expressive form is so abstracted that it might have been understood as drawing upon any number of artistic traditions, a quality that simply signified a modern style. For example, Ralph Stackpole, a leading local modernist and Johnson's teacher at the California School of Fine Arts for two years, wrote in 1935 that sculptors might look to the "few places dotted over the globe where sculpture has flourished," from Asia Minor to "Egypt and Greece, around to India and China and Java, then over to Mexico and up to British Columbia (the nearest point to us) where the Columbian Indians made totem poles, masks, etc., and back to Africa, where Negro art grew, as fine as any."[24]

Whichever of these traditions Johnson intended to draw upon, local art critics did not try to discern his sources. Johnson's achievement with *Chester* was its capacity to exemplify different meanings to different audiences. The *San Francisco Examiner*'s art critic, for example, simply described *Chester* as "a strong and moving conception." She also asserted Johnson's local professional standing without mentioning his race, referring to him as a "well known San Francisco artist."[25] San Franciscans' liberal conception of themselves as opposing racism and welcoming people of all races and ethnicities—despite evidence of discrimination gathered by local civil rights organizations and widespread support for anti-immigration laws—enabled them to support a Negro artist as a cosmopolitan modernist even as others encouraged him to focus on more clearly Negro subjects. While for Alain Locke, *Chester* established Johnson as an Africanist and, therefore, a member of the

4. Sargent Johnson, *Head of a Boy*, 1934. Terra cotta on wood base, 7 1/4 × 6 × 6 in. Formerly in the collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, current location unknown. Photo courtesy San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

New Negro interpretive community, in San Francisco the artist's work was absorbed into a more generalized interpretive framework.[26]

In fact, Locke had more in mind than reductivist, or essential race consciousness. In a 1925 essay, he called on American Negro artists to reach multiracial audiences with a multicultural practice, giving them a choice he framed in terms of a trans-oceanic metaphor: "new Armadas of conflict or argosies of cultural exchange and enlightenment."[27] Johnson sets African and Asian traditions into more explicit dialogue in another sculpture of the early 1930s, *Head of a Boy* (Figure 4). Although nothing is known of the sitter, this sculpture resembles the busts Johnson made of neighborhood children—especially *Chester*, in the sensitive details of eyes and lips carved in the manner of Egyptian "reserve heads"—and, notably, it rises from a base that resembles the sort of Buddhist throne alluded to in *Pearl*. While Johnson seems to have invented the decorative elements on Pearl's base, the wooden base he carved for *Head of a Boy* refers more directly to Buddhist iconography. With a pair of lions reclining symmetrically on either side of a form that may represent the wheel of Dharma or an incense burner, Johnson has replicated the imagery found on thrones supporting many Chinese and Indian sculptures of the Buddha. A solitary head is an image never found in Buddhist art, however; in this respect, Johnson's sculpture of Pearl more closely resembles the Buddhist sculptures he must have studied.

Although it is not known precisely which Asian sculptures were available to Johnson, he had many opportunities to study Buddhist art. His greatest patron of the time, Albert Bender, was a major collector of Asian art, donating works to several museums in the Bay Area as well as to the national museum of his native country, Ireland. Johnson's teacher Beniamino Bufano is also reported to have had

a large collection of Chinese sculpture.[28] And in Johnson's Berkeley neighborhood, the artist might have seen Buddhist devotional sculpture in the homes of Chinese or Japanese neighbors or, four blocks from his house, in the Japanese Buddhist temple, the Higashi Honganji, on Oregon Street. Finally, *Head of a Boy* is more didactically straightforward in its cultural references than *Pearl*: Johnson pairs the African-inspired terra cotta portrait head with a distinctly Buddhist base in a different medium, wood. Rather than assimilating disparate cultural references, he has kept the Asian and the African elements separate, calling attention to the distinctive qualities of each and to their harmonious relationship within the sculptural whole.

Taken as a group, Johnson's busts create a collective portrait of the Negro middle class, integrated with its Chinese American neighbors in 1920s and 1930s Berkeley. Was Johnson's perspective unique among African Americans or did others feel a similar affinity for Asia, too? I am still researching the attitudes of African Americans toward their Asian neighbors in San Francisco and the East Bay, but I think Du Bois, in his 1913 account of a visit to the West Coast published in the *Crisis* under the title "Colored California," offers a clue. Du Bois observed, "Here I had my first sight of the Pacific and realized how California faces the newest color problem, the problem of the relations of the Orient to the Occident. The colored people of California do not quite realize the bigness of their problem and their own logical position."[29] For Du Bois, this "problem" was local as well as national and transnational, a critical matter for California's Negroes to debate and one Du Bois discussed for the sake of his nationwide readership. Johnson's amalgamation of African and Asian art within a local modernist form rooted his work in a view of American history defined not only by the violent disruptions of the Middle Passage and slavery but also aggressive trade policies toward China and Japan, racist exclusion acts and housing discrimination, African American traditions, and the cultural contributions of Asian immigrants. Manifest in portraits of neighborhood children, Johnson invented an optimistic iconography for California's multicultural future.

If the portrait busts represent a personal, perhaps even romantic, notion of multiculturalism, Johnson's work with the sculptor Beniamino Bufano hints at a more pragmatic and political approach. From the end of 1935 until 1940, Johnson worked as Bufano's assistant on the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).[30] Most accounts of this period describe a one-sided relationship, with Bufano influencing—or even stifling—Johnson. There is evidence, however, that Johnson's role in some of Bufano's best-known public art projects, including his memorial to Sun Yat Sen (Figure 5), the Chinese nationalist leader and first provisional president

5. Beniamino Benvenuto Bufano, *Sun Yat Sen*, St. Mary's Square, San Francisco, 1937. Stainless steel, granite, and mosaic. Photograph dated 13 November 1937. San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library.

of Republican China, reveals the touch of a politically informed New Negro sculptor.

In a 1964 interview for the Archives of American Art, Johnson explained that as Bufano's assistant he sometimes created small clay sculptures approximately "a foot and a half" tall upon which Bufano would base large projects, including the monument to Sun and another work entitled *Peace*.[31] Johnson's comments in the interview can help us to understand that his role in some of Bufano's WPA projects was greater than historians have previously suggested—an uneasy collaboration and an expression of mutually compatible interests.

Although Johnson told the interviewer that the WPA allowed him to make the sort of work he wanted to, he also complained about working for Bufano, saying the senior sculptor kept all the WPA projects for himself, refusing to share with other sculptors. Johnson's charge is borne out by Willis Foster, a WPA supervisor who told one of Bufano's biographers that "Benny was supplied plenty of assistants, though he was always a bit slow to name them or share credit with them."[32]

By the time Johnson and Bufano joined the WPA at the end of 1935, Johnson had already made and exhibited *Forever Free* (Figure 6), a sculpture that seems to have established a columnar model for *Sun Yat Sen* and *Peace*.[33] In the interview, Johnson described *Forever Free* as "just a straight log. In relief on the log was a mother and two children." According to Johnson, Bufano was incredulous when he returned to San Francisco and saw the work: "When he came back he said, 'You know that you are not allowed to do that.'" Despite his initial dismissal of *Forever Free*, the columnar form to which Bufano objected subsequently became the central motif of his own monumental work from this period, coinciding with Johnson's work on preliminary models for him.[34]

During the Archives of American Art interview, Johnson looked at photographs of *Peace* and *Sun Yat Sen* and noted that Bufano, initially dismissive of *Forever Free*, decided to produce both sculptures according to Johnson's innovation. Johnson recalled the history of the making of *Sun Yat Sen* with a mixture of pride, authority, and bemusement. While giving Bufano full credit for the final product, Johnson also described—and takes credit for—part of the process. "He's gone over those things many times and change[d] them," Johnson explained.[35]

6. Sargent Johnson, *Forever Free*, 1933. Wood, gesso, cloth, and lacquer, 36 × 11 ½ × 9 ½ in. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Mrs. E. D. Lederman.

Johnson's role in creating the Sun memorial is important, not simply in terms of score-keeping or aesthetic innovation, but because for Johnson, a New Negro sculptor with a demonstrated interest in Asian art and culture who found the subject matter for his work in a multiethnic community, Sun would likely have been a figure of liberation and self-determination. Bufano had met Sun in China, a story told in 1937 as one motivation for his project.[36] Johnson might also have considered Sun significant, as many African Americans did, particularly those who felt the affinity of solidarity for Chinese republicanism. Johnson, whose New Negro consciousness was informed by his participation in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, probably read the *Crisis*, where Du Bois described Sun and the Chinese Republic as a model for African American self-determination.[37] Finally, Sun played a role in San Francisco's self-conception as a cosmopolitan city. Many San Franciscans had supported Sun's cause during his lifetime and were proud that he had lived among them on three occasions. The Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) had a significant membership among the local Chinese community and helped finance the project.[38] The Sun memorial was considered an important piece of monumental sculpture by many San Franciscans, and its dedication was reported in the city's English-language and Chinese-language newspapers.[39]

If Johnson's columnar figure served as the basis for the early maquettes of *Sun Yat Sen*, then the monument might be considered in relationship to *Forever Free*, a sculpture that, E. J. Montgomery reports, Johnson made using a lacquerware technique "of the ancient Egyptians, Orientals, and experienced frame makers."[40] San Francisco Museum of Modern Art conservator Barbara Schertel supports this claim. Based on her examination of *Forever Free* and a similar sculpture, *Negro Woman* (1935), Schertel concludes that Johnson made them using a frame maker's technique for "Japanning" furniture in emulation of Japanese lacquered furniture.[41] *Sun Yat Sen* is made of different materials: stainless steel, red granite, and concrete. Nevertheless, whether or not Bufano was aware of Sun's importance to African Americans, it strikes me as likely Johnson would have invested himself in the memorial project—if not in Bufano's ideas for it—in ways that lent the figure a measure of its quiet dignity. In the end, *Sun Yat Sen* must have been a key project for both Johnson and Bufano, if for each his own reasons. For Johnson, in this case, the personal also must have been political.

Johnson's sculptures of children and work on *Sun Yat Sen* might indicate a path distinct from those available to African Americans in the South or in other cities across the nation, enabling him as a Bay Area resident to identify himself with California as well as with the Pacific Rim, a localized response to the "color line." Furthermore, the deliberate study of both African and Asian art established a process by which Johnson and other African American artists might engage transnational cultures of modernism as equal participants and, crucially, from a potentially critical perspective. On the one hand, the reevaluation of African and Asian art promised to demonstrate that aesthetic values derived from Europe were not necessarily the best or the most appropriate for an increasingly cosmopolitan world. On the other, the New Negro's unique perspective on modernism promised to demand attention and respect on the international stage. Whether Johnson looked through the Golden Gate and across the Pacific Ocean or down the block to his Chinese neighbors, when he saw himself in relationship to the art and culture of Asia, his resulting sculptures articulated a process of self-reflection expressed through a desire for solidarity.

Notes

1. "57 Negro Artists Presented in Fifth Harmon Foundation Exhibit," *Art Digest* 7, no. 11 (1 March 1933): 18. Edward Alden Jewell, "Sargent Johnson Wins Chief Prize at Exhibition by Negro Artist, Sponsored by Harmon Foundation," *New York Times*, 21 February 1933, 22.

2. For two exceptions, see Tommy L. Lott, "Black Consciousness in the Art of Sargent Johnson," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture, a City Lights Anthology*, ed. James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 196. Angela L. Miller, Janet C. Berlo, Bryan J. Wolf, and Jennifer L. Roberts, *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 509–10.

3. Sargent Johnson to the Board of Directors, The Abraham Rosenberg Scholarship, San Francisco Art Association (hereafter SFAA), October 20, 1944; see Rosenberg Traveling Fellowship, 4th Award, Sargent Johnson, 1944–45 file, Anne Bremer Memorial Library, San Francisco Art Institute (hereafter, Bremer Library).

4. Judith Wilson discusses this possibility in her essay, "Sargent Johnson: Afro-California Modernist," in Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins and Wilson, *Sargent Johnson: African American Modernist* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1998), 27–31.

5. See Anthony W. Lee, *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 167–74. Also see Anne Schnoebelen, *Treasures: Splendid Survivors of the Golden Gate International Exposition* (revised edition; Berkeley: GGIE Research Associates, 2009), and Burton Benedict, ed., *The Anthropology of the World's Fairs: San Francisco's Panama Pacific International Exposition of 1915* (Berkeley: Scolar Press, 1983), 123–24.

6. Lloyd La Page Rollins, "Striking Advance in San Francisco's Art: Exhibition at Palace of the Legion of Honor Shows Progress in Development of Talent in Cultural Affairs," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 May 1931, clipping, 1931 SFAA Annual file, Bremer Library. On the gap between the East and West coasts, see the editorial *San Francisco Art Association Bulletin* 1, no. 9 (January 1935): 4. On the value California artists placed on their "isolation" from the East Coast, see Richard Cándida Smith, *Utopia and Dissent: Art, Poetry, and Politics in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3–9.

7. Mark Dean Johnson, "Uncovering Asian American Art in San Francisco, 1850–1940," in *Asian American Art: Asian American History, 1850–1970*, ed. Gordon Chang, Mark Dean Johnson, Paul Karlstrom, and Sharon Spain (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 9–16. Chang and Johnson, introduction to *Asian/American/Modern Art: Shifting Currents, 1900–1970*, ed. Daniel Cornell and Johnson (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2008), 13 n2. Coverage of local exhibitions of traditional Asian art appeared regularly in the SFAA's newsletter; see, for instance, Roi Partridge, "Chinese Art at Mills College," *San Francisco Art Association Bulletin* 1, no. 7 (November 1934): 5; and Marian Hartwell, "A Review of the Chinese Collection—S.F. Museum of Art," *San Francisco Art Association Bulletin* 2, no. 1 (May 1935): 1–5.

8. Caroline Goeser finds an early example of the stylized papyrus blossom in Douglas's *Krigwa Players Poster*, published in the May 1926 issue of the *Crisis*; see Goeser, *Picturing the New Negro: Harlem Renaissance Print Culture and Modern Black Identity* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 29–30. I have been unable to locate *Pearl*, last exhibited in the Harmon Foundation's annual exhibition of 1933, or to determine its exact dimensions.

9. See Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen,* 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); and David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. DuBois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919–1963* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 388–421. I thank Gordon Chang for sharing information with me about Marcus Garvey's support for Sun Yat-Sen.

10. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dark Princess* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 246.

11. I have documented Johnson's employment and residences from 1915, when he arrived in San Francisco, through the 1940s through information in the federal census, local city directories, exhibition catalogues and entry forms, and correspondence. Johnson seems to have moved with his wife, Pearl, and daughter, Pearl Adele, to the house at 2777 Park Street, Berkeley, in 1925; see *Catalogue: 48th Annual Exhibition, 1925* (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Association, 1925), 85. His residence is given as "Berkeley" in *Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Co., 1925), 1012. My characterization of the neighborhood surrounding San Pablo Park is based on a survey of the 1930 census and drawn from the Writers' Program, Works Progress Administration in Northern California, *Berkeley: The First Seventy-Five Years* (Berkeley: Gillick Press, 1941); J. Douglas Allen-Taylor, "South Berkeley Residents Gather in Honor of Berkeley Pioneer," *Berkeley Daily Planet*, 7 February 2006; "San Pablo Park Plans Centennial Bash," *Berkeley Daily Planet*, 24 August 2007; and Preserving California's Japantowns, www.californiajapantowns.org/berkeley.html. Johnson may have moved his family to the East Bay because housing discrimination was less pervasive there than in San Francisco; on discrimination, see Albert S. Broussard, *Black San Francisco: The Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900–1954* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 31–37.

12. Gee's comments on the neighborhood can be found in Allen-Taylor, "San Pablo Park Plans Centennial Bash." According to the 1930 census, Elizabeth Gee's family lived at 2773 Acton Street. Gee confirms this in a "Note to the File," added to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's file on *Elizabeth Gee* on 27 March 1998, composed by Janet Bishop upon a visit to the museum by Gee. I date *Elizabeth Gee* to 1925–27 on the basis of this note. Janet Bishop, "Note to the File," 27 March 1998, Sargent Johnson binders, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

13. "San Francisco Artists," interview with Sargent Johnson, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 October 1935, D3.

14. Mary McChesney, oral history interview with Sargent Johnson, 31 July 1964, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

15. Helen Shannon argued in "From 'African Savages' to 'Ancestral Legacy:' Race and Cultural Nationalism in the American Modernist Reception of African Art" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, New York, 1999), 324, that in the cases of *Elizabeth Gee* or *Chester*, Johnson simply chose for each a medium appropriate to the sitter's ethnicity. *Pearl*, a portrait of an African American girl made to resemble the traditionally Chinese medium of porcelain glazed blue-green, complicates this argument. Furthermore, *Chester*'s medium, terra cotta, is not specifically African but is also well-known to potters throughout Asia and much of the rest of the world.

16. On the leading "Africanist," see, for example, Alain Locke, "The American Negro as Artist," in "Africa and American Art," edited by Frederic Allen Whiting, *American Magazine of Art* 23, no. 3 (September 1931): 218. Alain Locke, "The African Legacy and the Negro Artist," in *Exhibition of the Work of Negro Artists* (New York: Harmon Foundation, Inc., 1931), 11.

17. Locke, "The African Legacy and the Negro Artist," 10, 11. Months later, Locke rephrased his evaluation of *Chester*, saying Chester "has the qualities of the African antique and recalls an old Baoulé mask. It is a long stretch from an isolated Negro sculptor living and working in California to the classic antiques of bygone Africa, but here it is in this captivating, naïve bust for even the untutored eye to see." Locke, "The American Negro as Artist," 218.

18. Alain Locke, "The Negro and the American Stage," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 10 (February 1926): 119, 120.

19. Alain Locke, "Introduction: The Drama of Negro Life," in *Plays of Negro Life: A Source-Book of Native American Drama*, ed. Locke and Montgomery Gregory (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1927), n.p.

20. Alain Locke, "Internationalism: Friend or Foe of Art?" *The World Tomorrow* 8 (March 1925): 76.

21. See Alain Locke, "African Art: Classic Style," *American Magazine of Art* 28 (May 1935): 271.

22. Chinese Art Association of America Record Book, 1930–1984, Asian American Studies Archives, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley. Anthony Lee has demonstrated that this is also what members of the Chinese Revolutionary Artists' Club were attempting when they also met with Rivera; Lee, *Picturing Chinatown*, 201–6. Chiura Obata gave similar advice to the Bay Area's *Nissei* artists, according to Bert Winther-Tamaki, "Overtly, Covertly, or Not at All: Putting 'Japan' in Japanese American Painting," in this book. For an analysis of Rivera's reception in San Francisco, see Lee, *Painting of the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Notably, this was the first time the jury had included someone from outside the Bay region: *Fifty-Third Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Art Association* (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Association, 1931), 7.

23. Shannon, "From 'African Savages' to 'Ancestral Legacy,'" 320–21. Johnson's prize was reported in each of San Francisco's important newspapers in accounts dated 24–26 April 1931; see, for example, Nadia Lavrova, "Art Association's Annual Opens," *San Francisco Examiner*, 26 April 1931, E11.

24. Ralph Stackpole, "The Local Sculpture Show," *San Francisco Art Association Bulletin* 2, no. 4 (September 1935): 4. On Johnson's studies with Stackpole, see Montgomery, *Sargent Johnson*, 10.

25. Lavrova, "Art Association's Annual Opens."

26. Tommy L. Lott, "Black Consciousness in the Art of Sargent Johnson," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture, a City Lights Anthology*, ed. James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy J. Peters (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 184, 197.

27. Quote from Alain Locke, "Enter the New Negro," in "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," special issue edited by Locke of *Survey Graphic* 6, no. 6 (March 1925): 634.

28. Bender donated works of Asian art to the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, and other Bay-area institutions. See also Audrey Whitty, *A Dubliner's Collection of Asian Art: The Albert Bender Exhibition* (Dublin: National Museum of Ireland, 2009–10). H. Wilkening; and Sonia Brown, *Bufano: An Intimate Biography* (Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1972).

29. W. E. B. Du Bois, "Colored California," *Crisis* 6, no. 4 (August 1913): 194.

30. Johnson became supervisor for at least two large-scale WPA projects in San Francisco: carved green terrazzo friezes with mosaic fountains and a mosaic mural for the Aquatic Park Bathhouse (1939–40) and a cast-concrete frieze depicting high school athletics for George Washington High School (1940–42). Before 1940, he held several other WPA positions.

31. McChesney, interview with Johnson, 1964. While *Sun Yat Sen* was dedicated in 1937, *Peace* was not displayed publicly until 1957, when it was sited on the entrance road to San Francisco International Airport. *Peace* was removed in 1996; it is pictured in Mary Ann Sullivan, Digital Imaging Project, Blufton University, www.bluffton.edu/~sullivanm/bufano/peace.html.

32. Rather, *Bufano and the U.S.A.*, 38.

33. *Forever Free* is not mentioned in the press until 1934 but the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art dates the sculpture to 1933. Ralph Stackpole, "Montgomery Street Gossip," *San Francisco Art Association Bulletin* 1, no. 6 (October 1934): 1. *Exhibition of Productions by Negro Artists* (New York: Harmon Foundation, Inc., 1933), 27. "Art: Sculptors' Business," *Time* (22 June 1936): 53. Johnson says in the Archives of American Art interview that he began the sculpture while Bufano was in France, in 1931 or 1932. Johnson exhibited two related drawings, *Defiant* and *Mother and Child*, in the Harmon Foundation exhibition of 1933, two and a half years or more before he began working for Bufano and at least three years before the "preliminary designs" for *Sun Yat Sen* were approved by the Sculpture Project of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, the San Francisco Art Association, and the Park Commission.

34. Bufano had made vertically oriented sculptures before the 1930s but none are columnar in the way that *Forever Free*, *Sun Yat Sen*, and *Peace* are. This columnar form becomes characteristic of much of Bufano's work for the rest of his career.

35. On the question of whether Bufano took credit for work done by his assistants, see also Thomas Albright, "The Art World: In the Wake of the Art Festival," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 October 1977, 60; and Alfred Frankenstein, "The Gentle Clown—and Man of Steel," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 August 1970, Datebook section, 38–39.

36. "San Francisco Monuments: Sun Yat Sen" subject file, San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library. The story of Bufano's encounter with Sun has been repeated many times; see, for example, John Reddy, "Stormy Benny," *Saturday Evening Post* 217, no. 31 (27 January 1945): 23; Valentina Fogher, *Beniamino Bufano: A Retrospective* (San Francisco: Museo ItaloAmericano, 2000), n.p.; and Rather, *Bufano and the U.S.A.*, 15.

37. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois*, 388–421. Du Bois, *W. E. B. Du Bois on Asia*.

38. William Hoy, manuscript about *Sun Yat Sen*, and [San Francisco Downtown Association?], *Sun Yat Sen*, both in the William Hoy Papers, 1935–49, Chinese Historical Society of America collection, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California, Berkeley. "Statues," *Time* (22 November 1937): 35.

39. For two photographs of memorial ceremonies, see *Mme. Chiang Kai Shek, along with a crowd of thousands, pays homage to Sun Yat-Sen's statue in St. Mary's Square* of 28 March 1943 (AAA-9598) and *Tse Kiong Sun Placing Flowers at the Foot of Statue Dedicated to His Grandfather Sun Yat Sen* of 12 November 1943 (AAA-9596), San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection, San Francisco Public Library, http://sfpl.org/index.php?pg=0200000301.

40. Montgomery, *Sargent Johnson*, 14.

41. Barbara Schertel, personal communication, 13 July 2009. Schertel, examination report for *Negro Woman* and *Forever Free*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 28 April 2009.

Encounters and Transference

"Gold Mine in Southeast Asia"

Russel Wright, Vietnamese Handicraft, and Transnational Consumption

Jennifer Way

In a 1956 essay, the designer Russel Wright (1904–1976) confessed that on his first trip to Vietnam, "I expected to find little or nothing to export." Instead, he found a gold mine, a Southeast Asia "bursting with opportunities for the American importer or developer who goes there with designs and merchandising know-how."[1] Best known for his contributions to interior and industrial design in the United States, Wright was also, during the Cold War era, involved in a transnational relationship with Southeast Asian craftsmen based on the reciprocity of production and consumption.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Wright's Melmac plastic dinnerware was on the tables of millions of Americans, and his organization of "The American Way" led to a consortium of artists, craftsmen, and manufacturers working together to produce low-cost home furnishings for sale in major department stores. After World War II, when American cultural production became an important element of global diplomacy, Wright's successful designs and activism as an ambassador for good design attracted the attention of the U.S. State Department, and in 1955 he contracted to help the new Republic of Vietnam improve "the design, production and distribution of Vietnamese handicraft products for export and domestic consumption."[2] Wright also traveled with Ramy Alexander, a craft expert, and Josette Walker, a fashion designer, to Taiwan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Hong Kong in 1955–56 to assess the larger region's potential to produce handicraft items for American domestic markets. In Vietnam, he and his colleagues observed people making pottery, handloom textiles, needlework, baskets, silk weavings, wood furniture, and lacquerware at sites ranging from cooperatives to semi-mechanized factories, schools, and refugee camps. Afterward, he

submitted a report to the State Department and published an article in *Interiors* magazine entitled "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia" about the possibilities he saw for craft export.[3] He ultimately oversaw the establishment of several handicraft centers in Southeast Asia, mounted trade shows and department store exhibitions of handicraft in the United States, and designed materials for furnishing middle-class American homes that he named after places in Southeast Asia. By 1958, when hopes had dimmed for the success of handicraft exports from Vietnam to America, Wright proposed a "Handicraft Program for Tourism" in Vietnam. He established the "Russel Wright Program Silk Screen Workshop" in Saigon the next year and oversaw its teaching of color, design, and printing.[4]

In the American design world, Wright was considered an educator and called a "designer diplomat" in recognition of his efforts.[5] His work in Southeast Asia came about as part of the State Department's promotion of handicraft production from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s as a means to foster economic conditions conducive to establishing and maintaining democracy in the nations there. The U.S. government wanted to help the new Republic of Vietnam meet its economic challenges, considering it "the proving ground of democracy in Asia," as Senator John F. Kennedy put it.[6] In the years following the French withdrawal from Vietnam in 1954 and the division of Vietnam along the 17th parallel and before the arrival of the first U.S. combat troops in 1961, the American government largely described its role in terms of giving aid to the anti-communist republic that was established in the south. The *U.S. Army Area Handbook for Vietnam*, for example, reported that American cultural influence there had risen steadily, thanks to an influx of educators as well as U.S. economic aid and military assistance, noting, "Substantial U.S. assistance has been given to the government of South Vietnam in the fields of graphic arts and crafts, music, motion pictures and the publication of textbooks."[7] The Army handbook presented the relationship between Vietnam as unidirectional geopolitics. Yet, if we examine Wright's trips to Vietnam, the information about modern design, American culture, and middle-class American life that he brought to Southeast Asia, the mobility of the things he collected there and brought back to the U.S., the images and texts about Asia that he and his colleagues circulated, and the handicraft objects he oversaw being produced and then displayed in Southeast Asia and the United States, it is clear that they participated not only in nation-state geopolitics but also in an in-betweenness of place characterizing transnationalism.

"Transnational" refers to activity between and crossing national borders. To be sure, methodologically, it alerts us to activity that is "inter-national," or between nations. But crucially, a transnational approach invites us to consider the agency of nongovernmental people and to look at programs, goods, and services crossing national borders as part

of temporary and long-term initiatives in addition to the activity of governments' diplomatic corps and armies. Using transnationalism as a methodological framework for scholarship helps us to consider the ways in which flows and exchanges across borders have been uneven in regard to power, and to examine dynamic processes that involve but in many ways exceed the nation state.

1. *Viet-Nam* (Washington, DC: Press and Information Office, Embassy of Viet Nam, ca. 1959). Pamphlet. Folder, Foreign Activities, Box 45, Russel Wright Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, New York.

With regard to Wright's involvement with handicraft and Southeast Asia, such an approach invites us to identify many kinds of cultural artifacts—photographs, films, pamphlets (Figure 1), references to historical art and culture, exhibitions, vanguard modern Western art and design, and Southeast Asian handicraft objects—and inquire about their significance in linking South Vietnam and the United States in the context of U.S. policies during the Cold War. Doing so advances existing scholarship about American governmental and corporate use of cultural diplomacy abroad during the 1950s, in the interlude before the conflict that many Americans would call the Vietnam War and many Vietnamese the American War.[8] By examining transnational aspects of American government-sponsored handicraft programs in Vietnam, we broaden the scope of a new body of scholarship on U.S.–Vietnam relations that looks at the period before the 1960s, including books such as Kathryn Statler's *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam*.[9] Recent work in American studies reminds us to push beyond cultural imperialism as "too simple a model to understand how culture works" and to open for consideration "the place of the Asian in American life and her or his understanding of America" as well as "the cultural work that forms originating in the United States do in cultures outside this country, studying their reception and reconfiguration in contexts informed by a deep understanding of the countries where that cultural work is taking place."[10]

Wright, along with other Americans and Southeast Asians, was also participating in a transnational activity based on the interconnectedness of production and

consumption as people, ideas, services, and goods crossed national borders. This was a relationship under study by contemporary American economists. Ruth Mack, for instance, explained that "the economics of consumption and production intermesh"; "effect becomes cause and cause effect."[11] In this case, American business and the middle classes were targeted as consumers of Southeast Asian culture. Yet Southeast Asian artisans also were encouraged to consume American and Asian culture in the very process of making handicrafts for export—to design and make craft objects in ways that anticipated what the U.S. market wanted, tailoring their products to its desires. This important feedback loop rendered Vietnamese handicraft less indigenous than already transcultural—or between cultures.

"The Refugee Problem"

The U.N. Economic and Social Council issued a report in 1951 on a survey of 10 Asian nations' readiness and potential to export handicrafts to the United States, where "a great demand exists for goods in the house furnishing line" due to record home construction after World War II. The survey, based on a specialist's tour and observations, noted that in Indochina, including Phnom-Penh, Saigon, and Biên Hòa, handicrafts arts were "very highly developed" and training facilities excellent. It identified some financial disincentives for Americans exporting handicraft from Indochina, however, and problems including "poor quality" and "lack of standardization." And it cautioned Asian handicraft exporters not to expect that Americans "will like or want the same things which local markets prefer." Instead, exporters must ensure that handicrafts created abroad are styled "for the [American] buyer's taste," it said, urging participating nations "[t]o study the American market requirements and to be prepared to shift production to those items in demand." Furthermore, it recommended that the U.S. government "engage services of a capable American merchandising expert to assist in introducing products to the American market and in guidance in understanding the requirements of that market."[12]

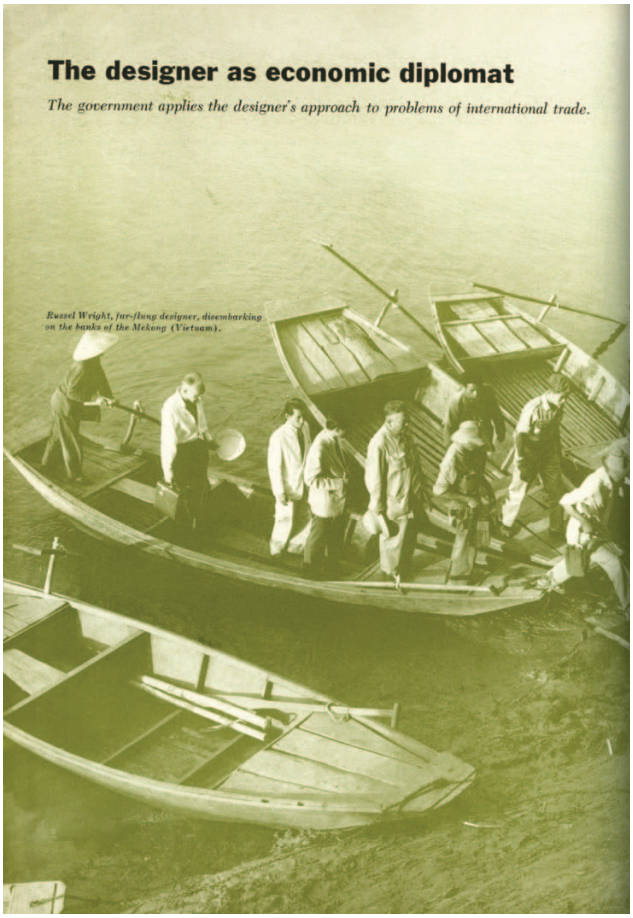
A few years later, the U.S. government put many of the survey's recommendations into practice. With the departure of the French, the political division of Vietnam in 1954, and the founding of the Republic of Vietnam in South Vietnam, the U.S. Operations Mission to Vietnam [USOM] sought to help the new republic counter communism and attain economic stability by providing programs based in part on educating the populace.[13] "The United States is proud to be on the side of the effort of the Vietnamese people under President [Ngo Dingh] Diem to establish freedom, peace, and the good life," the State Department reported in 1956.[14] That same year, Senator Kennedy explained Vietnam's significance as "the cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia," with an "economy . . . essential

to the economy of all of Southeast Asia," and the U.S. International Cooperation Administration dedicated $767 million to support personnel from government and business to help establish economic pathways linking America and Southeast Asia. Their efforts included working with small industries and craftsmen to raise the quality of their products, and locating markets for their work at home and abroad.[15] A Hoover Commission report in early 1955 had criticized the U.S. foreign aid program for not directly aiding the craftsmen of so-called underdeveloped countries.[16] In response, and in correlation with the U.N.'s "Handicrafts Marketing Survey," the State Department summoned American industrial designers for help in completing surveys in different countries. Wright was one of those called into action.

A crucial issue that Wright latched onto in his tour of Vietnam was what he termed "The Refugee Problem."[17] By this he meant the people who, following the division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel, left their homes to migrate from the north, ceded to communist forces, to the south before the border dividing the nation closed in May 1955. They moved south to flee the Viet Minh as part of what the U.S. Navy called Operation Passage to Freedom, and the U.S. distributed funds to help integrate these refugees.[18]

In an unpublished essay summarizing his travels in Southeast Asia during 1956, Wright wrote that "of all the needs in this area, none is more pressing than that of help to refugees." Moreover, he said, in Vietnam "our Technical Mission is taking part in the project of resettlement on reclaimed land."[19] In his article in *Interiors* magazine that same year, Wright described the refugees as "helpless Southeast Asians who, cut off from their past, look to the United States for a road to the future."[20] His phrase "road to the future," like the Navy's use of the word "passage" for its refugee aid operation, could refer to the means of access provided to people moving from north to south Vietnam. Additionally, the phrase suggests progress toward a destination, and implies that American aid could shepherd Vietnam into the territory of the Free World and a modern era that embraces the future.

A simply designed landscape scene on the cover of a report published by the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, DC, illustrated these ideas of movement through space and time to a better life (Figure 1). The focus is on the middle foreground, where a single, androgynous figure dressed in traditional pants, a jacket, and hat strides from left to right, carrying two farming implements over the shoulder. Behind the figure, the landscape changes dramatically. On the left, on a low hill, a farmer rides atop a very full wagon pulled by a water buffalo. Several people walking in front of the wagon balance enormous loads, some above their heads. This is a land and way of life the West conceived as a pre-industrial economy. On the right, a row of electric towers recedes across a taller hill covered by an orderly tilled field. In the foreground, the



2. Russel Wright photograph in Avrom Fleishman, "The Designer as Economic Diplomat: The Government Applies the Designer's Approach to Problems of International Trade," *Industrial Design* 3 (August 1956): 68.

figure strides away from the pre-industrial economy toward the place characterized by modern methods of farming and forms of energy and its distribution. In doing so, the figure visually narrates the government's expectation that its citizens actively move in the direction of epic change for the nation. Inside the pamphlet, short essays give the government of the Republic of Vietnam credit, with assistance from the United States, for achieving what the cover depicts.

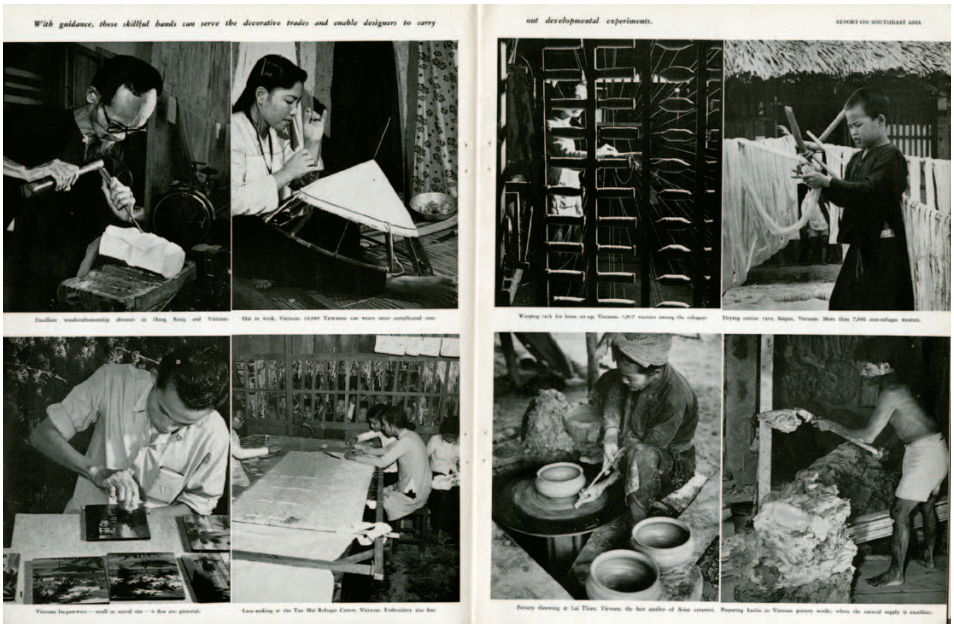
On the title page of the essay "The Designer as Economic Diplomat" published in *Industrial Design*, a photograph of Wright speaks more directly about U.S. initiatives to provide Vietnam with a "road to the future" (Figure 2). Like the pamphlet cover, it references mobility and aid leading to a change for the better. From the vantage-point of bird's-eye-view perspective, the photograph invites readers to look down on the scene that the caption describes as "Russel Wright, far-flung designer, disembarking on the banks of the Mekong (Vietnam)." In the photograph, Wright stands inside a boat (the second figure from the left, holding a hat in his left hand), waiting to disembark along with a retinue of unidentified design colleagues, U.S. officials, and local dignitaries.

Interestingly, mobility, modernity, and resources for an improved way of life contrast with the immobility and provincialism the *U.S. Army Area Handbook* associated with the refugees. The handbook stated, for example: "The Vietnamese . . . do not readily migrate"; "Their ancestor cult tends to bind them to their birthplaces, and to leave the family land remains for most Vietnamese an extremely serious step." The observation weds the people to their land and family, and renders the choice to leave

an example of the Vietnamese commitment to what the U.S. conceived as the larger political issues at stake: "That over 900,000 Vietnamese in the Communist-controlled north chose, after the division of the country in 1954, to go as refugees to the South [w]as an indication of the strength of their feelings about conditions under Communists."[21]

3. Russel Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," *Interiors* 116, no. 1 (August 1956): 94.

Wright creatively emphasized the refugees' potential as a workforce, writing: "There are between 500,000 and 800,000 refugees in Vietnam eager to work but with little to do."[22] He sought to help attract the patronage of the American businesses and middle classes by turning the refugees from a potential political liability into cultural artisans ready to participate in transnational economic and cultural flows. A major contribution to the effort came from black-and-white photographs Wright published in his article in *Interiors*, including some photos by renowned photographer Henri Gilles Huet. Huet was then working for USOM after serving as a combat photographer for the first Indochina War (and before covering what Americans refer to as the Vietnam War). The pictures evoked the homelessness of refugees from Cambodia and northern Vietnam by visually emphasizing their singularity (Figure 3). For example, one individual sits surrounded by baskets with eyes downcast, focusing on his handicraft. The caption explained, "The young basketmaker . . . in the Xom Moi refugees camp, Vietnam, is typical of millions of willing but helpless Southeast Asians, who, cut off from their past, look to the United States for a road to the future."[23] Equally, the images championed the refugees' personal industry. Photographs show refugees making hats, lacquerware (baskets), and lace as well as weaving, dying cotton yarn, throwing pottery, and preparing kaolin (Figure 4).



4. Russel Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," *Interiors* 116, no. 1 (August 1956): 98–99.

A comparison of these images with line illustrations published two years earlier in a French book entitled *Connaissance du Viêt-nam* (Figure 5) helps us to see how the photographs modify as well as affirm existing visual narratives about Vietnamese handicraft. The line illustrations do not individualize artisans or indicate the times and places of their work. Instead, they stage them in a silent tableau suggesting timeless materials, techniques, forms, and makers. In contrast, some aspects of the photographs Wright published seem to render handicraft artisans topical rather than timeless. The glossy pages of *Interiors* magazine, the graphic quality of the black-and-white photographs, and Wright's text referring to the refugees' homelessness loosely associate them with the look and subject matter of American mass print media reporting on current events.

Yet other aspects push the photographs beyond reportage. For example, they emphasize the vulnerability of the subjects with dramatic angles and chiaroscuro (see Figure 3) and promote a visual narrative similar to the illustrations in certain respects. Like the line illustrations, the photographs avoid making direct political references. Nor do they suggest that handicraft production has a changing history. Most interesting is the photographs' omission of visual references to the refugee status of many of the artisans, who lived and worked in camps along with thousands of other migrant people. The title of Wright's article—"Gold Mine in Southeast Asia"—takes this treatment a step further. It refers to the refugees collectively, as a malleable, precious element that the U.S. government, business, and trades could mine and refine. The endeavor would turn the refugees themselves into consumers of American

5. Gustave Dumoutier, in Pierre Huard and Pierre Durand, *Connaissance du Viêt-nam* (Hanoi: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1954), 155.

culture and inspire Wright to engage with places in Southeast Asia in his own work. Before considering some examples, it is necessary to review how Wright represented Vietnam to the United States and what ideas about American consumers shaped his approach to facilitating handicraft production and distribution abroad.

Opportunities for Importers

An especially revealing element of the 1956 essay is a two-page spread of black-and-white photographs of crafts workers. A caption states, "With guidance, these skillful hands can serve the decorative trades and enable designers to carry out developmental experiments."[24] Wright was saying that under the tutelage of American designers, refugee artisans could make handicrafts for the American decorative arts market. They also would serve as resources for American designers' "developmental experiments." *Interiors'* readership was consuming references to refugees that signified both their need for assistance and their labor potential. In addition, these readers may have absorbed the idea that Southeast Asian handicraft artisans themselves amounted to a resource American designers could use to advance their own agendas.

Interestingly, Wright set limits on the extent to which the Asian artisans' consumption of American culture should affect their work. He told American readers of

Interiors that he wanted handicraft artists to "improve their condition within their actual potentialities, rather than concentrating on an unhappy, piece-meal imitation of us." In addition, Southeast Asian handicraft production should avoid modern technological production. He urged, "Instead of becoming the helpless victim of industrialization, village crafts, revitalized, could play a minor, perhaps, but active part in a new kind of over-all development."[25] The call for Southeast Asians to preserve pre-modern craft production dovetailed with comments by U.N. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. associating craft with heritage. At the opening of the Southeast Asia Rehabilitation and Trade Development exhibition held in the First International Housewares Show at the New York Coliseum, Lodge commented, "Economic development should not mean disrupting old cultures, uprooting people or throwing away the best heritage of past centuries."[26] It also dovetailed with a post-war American rediscovery of handcraft and concomitant valorization of natural materials and evidence of hand labor as compensation for what the objects of everyday life lost by being made in modern, mass industrialized processes.[27] In the draft of an essay Wright wrote in response to a letter Lodge sent to the *New York Times,* he argued that "this need for the old and the handmade grows right along with the new, machine-made products." But he clarified, "The best way we evolved to have the Asian small producer make things that Americans would want to buy was to have Americans design the products." Thus, "rather than poor copies of Western goods that have no place in their life," he said, "native designers must learn the demands of the U.S. consumer" and designers will "train them to our standards of production" so "we can get people who have never seen American life to create things that Americans may buy."[28]

Wright's remarks belie power coursing along transnational pathways. By expressing "a desire to rescue 'authenticity' out of destructive historical change," in anthropological terms, Wright denied subjects in relations of power a complete "contemporaneity and a modern history of their own."[29] In a draft for a lecture about his travel throughout Southeast Asia Wright specified, "[I]n each country I saw that there was a small advanced guard group that were ashamed of this wholesale and vulgar imitation of the west."[30] He asked, "This is what happens in highly industrialized countries such at [*sic*] the U.S.—but in our country, handicraft labor is almost extinct—so how will the increased need for handicraft products be supplied to the industrialized nations?" Rhetorically, Wright responded, "We want handmade products from foreign countries but we want them to have the character and the personality of the particular foreign country from which they come. And so the great population of handcraftsmen of the Far East can supply a goodly amount of the increasing and eternal need for handicraft products in the western industrialized countries. However, it is necessary that such products be designed for a world of which the Asian handcraftsman has little knowledge or understanding."[31] Wright

demonstrated his power to determine what alterations could be allowed in regard to handicraft even as he brought American ideas, materials, and resources, such as modern design and visual and material culture, to the artisans, for whom it modeled consumer expectations and good design.

Markets and Adaptation

As a result of his first trip to Southeast Asia, Wright concluded that in Vietnam handicraft production was already operating at a level close to readiness for export. He thought this would be feasible with American "assistance . . . by means of design and styling" and a "program of education in design and technical training."[32] The assistance Wright provided included his selection of "some 1,500 articles made by hand in Southeast Asia" for the Southeast Asia Rehabilitation and Trade Development exhibition, not as evidence of art's history or a living culture but rather, as the *New York Times* reported, "on the basis of their appeal to American merchants and consumers" and "leading department store executives, import-export companies and manufacturers" who will study them."[33] The following year, Russel Wright Associates contracted to participate in the handicrafts development program in Vietnam, to "increase output, improve quality, extend marketing product variety and reduce costs of village and urban craft industries so as to raise living standards for the large sections of populations who depend on these industries for most of their livelihood and material goods." Wright would also design castings in the United States and at the Lai Thieu pottery factory in South Vietnam.[34]

During the late 1950s Wright oversaw the establishment of handicraft centers. In 1958 he supervised Ken Uyemura of Russel Wright Associates and Michiko Uyemura in launching "A Handicraft Development Center [in Saigon that] . . . provided organization and technical assistance and also extended long-term loans to craft enterprises." It exported types of hats worn by Vietnamese women along with hall and floor coverings, window blinds, table mats, basketry, and lacquerware. The center also organized traveling exhibitions of lacquerware and reproductions of Khmer sculpture and ceramics.[35] Wright received permission to go to temples in Cambodia "to reproduce metal castings of sculpture to export"; he explained, "In our homes the ancient motifs can create a new dimension for walls." The reproductions had cultural value as simulations of works of art, commercial value as things created for sale, and pedagogic value, as did the "more than 200 demonstration items designed by the Uyemuras that were sold there to the Vietnamese and the large American colony and the tourists that came through Saigon."[36] USOM praised the handicraft program in Vietnam overall for "greatly expand[ing] both the domestic and foreign handicraft market."[37] Beginning in 1959, the Handicrafts Sales Center

in Saigon directly sold the work of artisans and small industrialists. The *Area Handbook for Vietnam* credited the center's "financial and technical assistance to craftsmen" and its store with achieving "an expanded domestic market for handicraft products" and for its progress in creating "a foreign market which shows promise of becoming increasingly important."[38]

Throughout these initiatives, Wright consistently warned handicraft artisans not to produce "an unhappy, piece-meal imitation of Americans," while at the same time encouraging them to adapt to American tastes, adopting a bit of a topsy-turvy strategy.[39] In early 1956, when Wright returned to the United States from his first trip to Southeast Asia, he "started right in adapting Asian handcraft products to twentieth-century American usage." He believed that producing handicraft for American markets necessitated establishing chains of production and consumption linking the United States and Vietnam, with handicraft ranking as a key link. "We do not simply make designs expecting the producers to produce them somehow, and then sell them somehow. The essence of our method is—the joining of a specific market to a specific production."[40]

Rita Reif of the *New York Times* reported that this was how it worked: "Once a product is successful here [in the United States]," Mr. Wright acquaints the producers and craftsmen abroad on how it is used in American homes. . . . Mr. Wright films interiors of homes, shows the well-stocked shelves of department stores and small shops and educates artisans abroad on how their work has meaning in our homes," she reported.[41] Among other methods used "to bring out in the students a strong sense of Vietnamese design and thus establish a design style which could be identified as Vietnamese in character" was the relay to Southeast Asian craftsmen of information relating to modern design, as evidenced by slides of "The Logic and Magic of Color: An exhibition celebrating the centennial anniversary of the Cooper Union," 1960. To Vietnam Wright also brought material on American culture, world culture, and design, for example, prototypes for costume jewelry, a "Survey of Oriental influence in the current U.S. Home Furnishing Market," films about Frank Lloyd Wright's studio, Taliesin, and the arts of India and Japan, and slides and the catalogue of the Museum of Contemporary Crafts' exhibition, "Designer-Craftsmen USA 1960," which featured the theme of objects "designed and handcrafted for use."[42]

The archives suggest that Wright facilitated the consumption of American culture in Southeast Asia as part of the process of handicraft production there for distribution and consumption in the United States. Ostensibly, from studying examples of good design and American culture and lifeways, artisans would learn how to make items pleasing to Americans yet still identifiable to them as Vietnamese. With regard to silkscreen training, Wright explained that "throughout the course

of study and practice, effort was made to bring out in the students a strong sense of Vietnamese design and thus establish a design style which could be identified as Vietnamese in character." The efforts proved successful insofar as they "awakened in the Vietnamese people themselves real awareness of Vietnamese handicrafts which they had not known of or had taken for granted."[43]

At the same time, Wright was working with DuPont market research to create an upholstery line called "Cambodia, A Fabrilite Upholstery that Breathes for Greater Comfort," "executed both in light pastels and rich, deep-toned colors, given the exotic, deeply sculptured texture of handcrafted oriental fabric"—in Mekong Tan, Malacca Yellow, Salavan Chartreuse, Bandai Green, Kanchow Coral, Tonkin Turquoise, Saigon Tan, Malaya Green, Nanking Red, Rupat Pink, Tahan Brown, Amoy Pepperwhite, and Kangar Ivory.[44] The names of the upholstery colors transpose the geography of China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Burma into a palette for decorating the American middle-class home.

As part of this elaborate feedback loop of production and consumption, Wright helped to build an American market for Southeast Asian handicrafts with displays at trade fairs at the New York Coliseum in 1956 and 1958. In 1958 Russel Wright Associates also launched an exhibition of Vietnamese handicrafts and art at W. & J. Sloane in New York City that traveled to 11 major American department stores.[45]

Wright's displays in all of these venues promoted the allure of items based not on current political and economic relations but on their association with far off places of mystery and exoticism. The displays recycled photographs taken during Wright's first trip to Southeast Asia, but they lacked contextualization. For American viewers, the displays referenced a kind of cosmopolitanism, a way of knowing the world that comes from traveling widely or being exposed to cultures of many places. The tone echoed what the Washington embassy for the Republic of Vietnam was promoting in those pre-war years: "Viet-nam as a tourist center" that is "likely to appeal to the tourist who seeks relaxation and quiet comfort in an exotic atmosphere" and to "the admirer of the arts [who] will find Viet-Nam's historical treasures an unending source of interest."[46] Wright noted that the lacquerware paintings on wall panels and decorative screens "while highly regarded by collectors in the Orient and in Paris, have never been seen in the U.S. Typically oriental in their rich, highly decorated style, their craftsmanship is extraordinary." The items forged a pathway for the transnational consumption of Vietnamese handicraft as part of an American practice of using cultural worldliness as a sign of status. How worldly? *The New York Herald Tribune* explained, "Objects on view are typical of ancient crafts excelled in by the natives. In some cases the natives have been encouraged to adapt proportions and design changes suited to our needs."[47]

Notes

1. Russel Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," *Interiors* 116 (August 1956): 94–101, quotes at 100.

2. "Amendment No. 5 to Agreement between the United States of America International Cooperation Administration and Russel Wright doing business as Russel Wright Associates" (July 11, 1957), 1; box 46, Russel Wright Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library (hereafter Wright Papers).

3. "Survey and Recommendations for Advancing the Economic Welfare of Workers in Small Production Shops and Cottage Industries of Taiwan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Hong Kong (December 20, 1956)," box 44, Wright Papers. Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," 94–101.

4. "Final Report on Services and Accomplishment by Russel Wright Associates to the Republic of Vietnam under contract with International Cooperation Administration" (May 1961), 2–3; box 45, Wright Papers.

5. "Design as a Political Force, Part 2," *Industrial Design* 4, no. 4 (April 1957): 44–60. See also Conrad Brown, "ICA's Technical Assistance of U.S. Industrial Designers and U.S. Craftsmen Promise Some Exciting Results in Their Efforts to Aid the Asiatic Craftsman," *Craft Horizons* 18, no. 4 (July/August 1958): 29–37.

6. John F. Kennedy, "America's Stake in Vietnam: Cornerstone of the Free World in Southeast Asia," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 22 (1 August 1956): 617–18.

7. George L. Harris et al., *Area Handbook for Vietnam/US Army* (Washington, DC: American University, Foreign Areas Studies Division, September 1962; reprint, October 1964), 108.

8. Robert Haddow, *Pavilions of Plenty: Exhibiting American Culture Abroad in the 1950s* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

9. Kathryn C. Statler, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007). See also Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919–1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and James M. Carter, *Inventing Vietnam: The United States and State Building, 1954–1968* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

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11. Ruth Mack, "Trends in American Consumption and The Aspiration to Consume," *American Economic Review* 46 (May 1956): 67.

12. The report issued by the U.N. Economic and Social Council outlined the results of a survey sponsored by the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), which sent a handicraft marketing specialist to 10 nations. See ECAFE, "Handicrafts Marketing Survey" (U.N. Economic and Social Council, 15 February 1951), 39, box 43, Wright Papers, 65, 69, 73.

13. *USOM Vietnam operational report* no. 7 (Saigon: Republic of Vietnam, 1961), 71; box 45, Wright Papers.

14. Walter S. Robertson, "Progress in Free Viet-Nam," *Department of State Bulletin* 34 (11 June 1956): 973.

15. "Design as a Political Force," 45–46.

16. Brown, "ICA's Technical Assistance," 29.

17. Russel Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," 96.

18. "U.S. Gives Viet-Nam $37 Million for Refugee Resettlement," *Department of State Bulletin* (6 February 1956): 208.

19. "Far East Article," box 43, Wright Papers.

20. Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," 95.

21. Harris et al., *Area Handbook for Vietnam/US Army*, 49.

22. Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," 100.

23. See Horst Faas and Tim Page, eds., *Requiem: By the Photographer who Died in Vietnam and Indonesia* (New York: Random House, 1997). Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," 95.

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28. "A Bamboo Bridge: Aid Where it is Needed Most" (typewritten manuscript labeled as a draft, 1961), 7; Box 38, Wright Papers.

29. James Clifford, "Of Other Peoples: Beyond the 'Salvage' Paradigm," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, no. 1, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987). Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Objects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 97.

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32. "Recommendations for Development of Handicrafts Products in Vietnam," *Survey and Recommendations for Advancing the Economic Welfare of Workers*, 142.

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34. "Contract with USA Foreign Operations Administration" (30 June 1955), 2; box 46, Wright Papers.

35. Design Derby, Miami (1958), 5; box 38, Wright Papers.

36. Harriet Morrison, "Designs from S.E. Asia Coming Here," *New York Herald Tribune,* 2 April 1958, 2:2; box 45, Wright Papers.

37. *USOM Vietnam operational report* no. 7 (Saigon: Republic of Vietnam, 1961), 71.

38. Harris et al., *Area Handbook for Vietnam/US Army*, 392.

39. Wright, "Gold Mine in Southeast Asia," 96. "Market for Asian Handicrafts in the US," 12.

40. "Movie Narrative for Vietnam," *Survey and Recommendations for Advancing the Economic Welfare of Workers*, 173. Design Derby, Miami (1958), 3.

41. Rita Reif, "Art Works from Orient Seek American Market," *New York Times,* 29 August 1960, 19.

42. *Final Report on Services and Accomplishment by RWA to the Republic of Vietnam under Contract with ICA* (May 1961), 5, 9, 7, 8. Box 45, Wright Papers.

43. Ibid., 5, 10.

44. DuPont (1956–57); box 7, Wright Papers.

45. "New Business with Vietnam," memo paper from RWA; box 38, Wright Papers. The schedule for the Vietnamese handicrafts and art object show traveling September 1958 to June 1959 included stops at W. & J. Sloane, New York; Hudson's, Detroit; Jordan-Marsh, Boston; Wanamaker's, Philadelphia; Woodward & Lothrop, Washington, DC; Rich's, Atlanta; Pogue's, Cincinnati; Scruggs, St. Louis; Foley's, Houston; W. & J. Sloane, Beverly Hills; W. & J. Sloane, San Francisco; and Frederick & Nelson, Seattle.

46. *Exhibition of Art and Handcraft of Viet Nam*, Russel Wright Associates, New York; box 43, Wright Papers. *Viet-Nam* (ca. 1959), 20. On correlations between cosmopolitanism and exoticism, see Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2002): 1–22, esp. 7.

47. *Exhibition of Art and Handcraft of Viet Nam*, 1–2; box 43, Wright Papers. Harriet Morrison, "Art Objects of Vietnam," *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 September 1958, 2:2; box 45, Wright Papers.

ROCI East

Rauschenberg's Encounters in China

Hiroko Ikegami

In the long and celebrated career of Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008), the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange project has occupied an uneasy place. ROCI (pronounced "Rocky") took place from 1985 to 1991, when the artist created and exhibited works of art in 11 countries and regions to promote peace and understanding among diverse cultures. He deliberately chose what he called "sensitive areas" (i.e., areas that had little contact with American art and culture because of differences in their economic and political systems), and the whole international art project ultimately encompassed ROCI Mexico, ROCI Chile, ROCI Venezuela, ROCI China, ROCI Tibet, ROCI Japan, ROCI Cuba, ROCI USSR, ROCI Berlin, and ROCI Malaysia.[1] It concluded in 1991 with a large exhibition entitled *ROCI USA* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, where no less than 171 works inspired by the hosting countries were on view (for the sake of clarity, titles of actual ROCI exhibitions are italicized in this chapter, whereas titles of projects are not).[2]

A project of this magnitude has never been undertaken by any other artist, and Rauschenberg even made a speech at the United Nations in December 1984 to announce it to ambassadors and diplomats. A couple of months before his speech, he wrote the "Tobago Statement" explaining its purpose:

> *Emphasis will be placed on sharing experiences with societies less familiar with non-political ideas or communicating "worldly" through art . . . I feel strong in my beliefs, based on my varied and widely traveled collaborations, that a one-to-one contact through art contains potent and peaceful powers, and is the most non-elitist way to share exotic and common information, seducing us into creative mutual understandings for the benefit of all.*[3]

Despite these lofty ideas, the venture was largely dismissed as unconvincing in artistic value and ethically questionable in concept when *ROCI USA* opened in Washington. While some reviewers praised his creation as "Rauschenberg Renaissance," most greeted it with skepticism, commenting on a "cultural arrogance" that lay behind the artist's optimistic promotion of world peace.[4] One even called him an "art imperialist," who behaves like a "big-time visiting American aided by ambassadors and surrounded by his entourage."[5] In the age of post-colonial theory, ROCI seemed to some critical eyes like a project of cultural invasion.

Before ROCI is dismissed as American cultural imperialism, however, it is important to examine with care the ways in which host countries received the project. This essay focuses on *ROCI China*, which took place at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing in 1985. The exhibition coincided with the country's "culture fever" with Western art and culture, and a number of contemporary artists recall the show as a bold and generous gesture, and a significant event that influenced their subsequent careers. Chinese artists and critics whom the author interviewed in the summer of 2009—including Xu Bing, Zhang Wei, Gao Minglu, and Li Xianting—stressed that the exhibition did a great favor to the emerging avant-garde art scene, which was in desperate need of information from the outside world after the Cultural Revolution. They emphasized the difficulty of organizing a Western contemporary art show in China at the time, and said that only Rauschenberg was willing to take up the challenge. In the local context, therefore, *ROCI China* functioned as a much-needed catalyst for Chinese artists to begin familiarizing themselves with the global art scene.

This poses an intriguing paradox: while Rauschenberg's home audiences faulted him for his cultural arrogance, audiences in China appreciated his real contribution to the beginnings of Chinese contemporary art. Another facet of this paradox is an assumption held by both American and Chinese artists that it was somehow necessary to have a contact with "Western" art in order to begin authentic contemporary art. To unravel this paradox, it is necessary to consider the issue of "cultural time lag," or cultural divide between the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc in the last stages of Cold War, which was a crucial factor that determined the reception of ROCI in host countries. In this sense, the phrase "East–West interchanges" had a double meaning for China, a country that belonged to the East both culturally and politically at the time. A discussion of *ROCI China* can lead to a reconsideration of not only American art but also the art of the Eastern Bloc in a global context, allowing us to assess ROCI's ambivalent legacy in a larger discourse of world art history.

ROCI's origin dates back to the 1964 world tour of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, which Rauschenberg joined as a costume and set designer.[6] Together with the company, he visited 30 cities in 14 countries, including India,

1. Robert Rauschenberg working on *7 Characters* series, Xuan Paper Mill, Jingxian, China, June 1982. Photo © 1982 Ruth Saff.

Thailand, Japan, and, behind the Iron Curtain, Czechoslovakia and Poland. During the tour, he produced not only sets and costumes for the dance company but also created his own works from local materials—including "Combines" that reassemble found materials. In Tokyo, for instance, he made a major Combine entitled *Gold Standard*, collecting junk objects from the streets and assembling them on a traditional gold folding screen. This engagement with a local culture set a pattern for Rauschenberg's future international enterprises. In addition, as he had the responsibility of "taking the most impoverished, impossible spaces and turning them into real theatrical events" as a stage manager, he considered the 1964 world trip a "good out-of-town rehearsal for ROCI."[7]

Conceived by Rauschenberg as a kind of peace mission to create global connections in art, however, ROCI was different in nature from his previous international engagements. In fact, the idea for ROCI took shape during his first visit to China in 1982 (Figure 1). Visiting the Xuan Paper Mill, the oldest paper mill in the world, in Jingxian, Anhui Province, he was shocked to see people deprived of the freedom to travel in their own country, completely disconnected from the outside world. According to Donald Saff, a print artist who accompanied him on the trip and later acted as ROCI's project manager, the Americans' freedom in China was quite limited as well. Despite the central government's permission, Rauschenberg and his crew had to stay at Yellow Mountains for a while, hindered by Jingxian officials who feared that the Americans might steal their secret of papermaking.[8] Even after they entered the village, they were not allowed to work inside the mill. Rauschenberg, therefore, had to give craftsmen

2. Robert Rauschenberg, *7 Characters: Individual*, 1982. Silk, ribbon, paper, paper-pulp relief, ink, and gold leaf on handmade Xuan paper, 43 × 31 in. From a suite of 70 variations published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

his designs and ideas so that they could work on them in the mill, show him what they did, and continue with the procedure until he completed a series of paper-based works entitled *7 Characters* (Figure 2).

In Beijing, Rauschenberg visited the Central Academy of Graphic Art and saw that the students were skilled but producing mediocre works because they were not allowed to create anything beyond the official style and subject. Feeling a responsibility to introduce them to the world, he and Saff gave a lecture on the history of Western modern art, and the students' enthusiastic responses convinced him of their need for communication with outside cultures. As Rauschenberg had already entertained an idea for an international traveling show, he decided to focus on countries that had little exposure to contemporary Western art (Japan and Mexico, two close allies of the United States, were exceptions). Constantly incorporating his responses to different cultures, Rauschenberg envisioned ROCI as an ever-evolving, accumulative project, in which people of diverse backgrounds could communicate with one another through his art.

While the project seems optimistic to a fault today, it satisfied a craving for Western art in China. With the end of Cultural Revolution in 1976, China had started receiving Western modern art by the mid-eighties. In 1981, works by Abstract Expressionist painters such as Jackson Pollock and Hans Hofmann in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, were shown for the first time in China. The MFA exhibition, accompanied by a Chinese-language catalogue that included an essay on American abstract painting, traveled from the National Art

Museum of China in Beijing to Shanghai Museum.[9] The "anti-spiritual pollution campaign" of 1983 put a hold on this trend for one year, however, and it was only at the end of 1984 that the Central Communist Party started a massive program to open up the country to Western arts and thoughts.[10] As a result, Chinese artists encountered modernism and postmodernism all at once, mainly through publications. It was at this crucial moment that *ROCI China* took place, meeting their desire to see works of contemporary Western art in person.

Still, Rauschenberg's project was inevitably burdened by a long and complicated process. Although he had approached the Chinese Ministry of Culture during his 1982 visit, he had to wait for the end of the "anti-spiritual pollution campaign" before starting a real negotiation. When the campaign began to wane in the summer of 1984, an American-based Chinese woman named Chun-Wuei Su Chien, who had acted as his coordinator and translator in 1982, returned to China and resumed the discussion with the Chinese Exhibition Agency. Her husband, Chih-Yung Chien, a physics professor at Johns Hopkins University, also did a considerable amount of advance negotiation with the government—including making a slide presentation of selected works by Rauschenberg with his wife's introductory text in Chinese—when he attended the thirty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of People's Republic of China as an honored guest in October 1984.

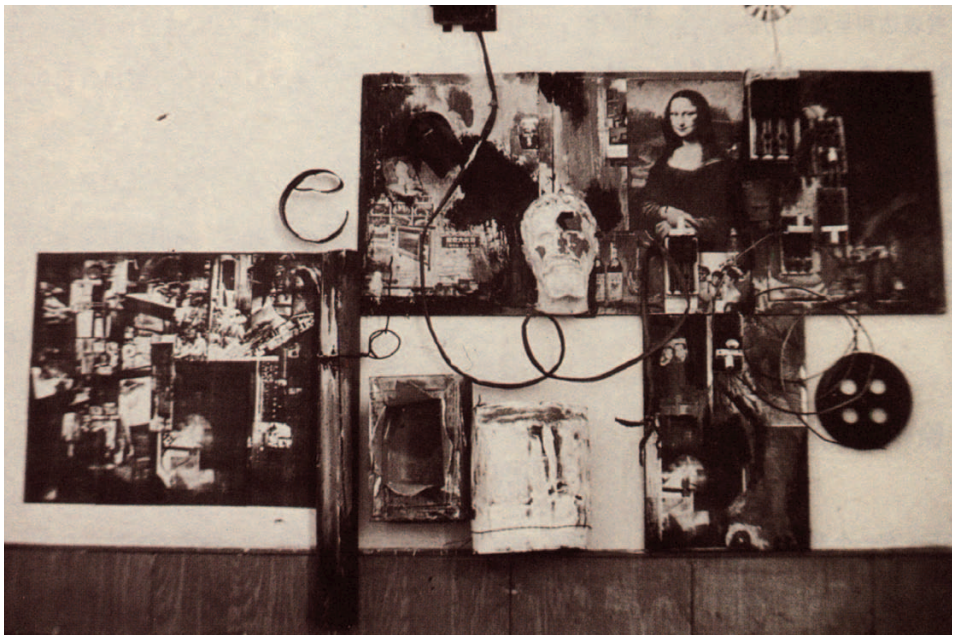
By that time, government officials recognized the merit of *ROCI China* in the context of increasing cultural exchange, but a solo show of a Western avant-garde artist, who was still alive and very active, was unprecedented and a potential political risk. Thus they demanded that Chun-Wuei Su Chien assume full responsibility for the selection of artworks and the catalogue production, and that all of the correspondence on the subject go through her.[11] Rauschenberg nominated her as a curator of *ROCI China*, and Chien traveled to Beijing again in November 1984 to reach an agreement with the Chinese Exhibition Agency about the budget, installation, and content of the exhibit.[12] The agency's requirements were stringent: it would check in advance all the works and video materials to be included in the show, and the Rauschenberg side would be responsible for all exhibition expenses, including the cost of a dance performance by the Trisha Brown Company that was planned in conjunction with the exhibition opening. Together with the National Art Museum's gallery rental fee of $26,000, the overall budget amounted to about $45,000.[13]

As the first Western contemporary art exhibition in the country, *ROCI China* unleashed a great shock in Beijing, attracting more than 300,000 visitors during its three-week run. First of all, the scale of the exhibition was unprecedented as it used four large exhibition halls on the first floor of the National Art Museum of China, occupying 2,250 square meters (about 7,380 square feet). Secondly, it was

3. Xu Bing at Robert Rauschenberg's *ROCI China* exhibition in Beijing, The National Art Museum of China, 1985. Photo courtesy Xu Bing Studio Inc.

presented in multiple media. While most of Rauschenberg's works involved the use of mixed media, the *Summerball* series, which consisted of photographs taken by the artist in various parts of China, was installed as a 100-foot-long photo installation on the arched wall of the circular gallery. In addition, television monitors were scattered around the exhibition; one of them introduced Rauschenberg's life and work at the entrance, while others showed his activities in different ROCI host countries as well as American popular culture such as cartoons and musicals. Thirdly, the walls of the exhibition space were repainted. Since the National Art Museum had been built in 1962 as a showcase for idealized Chinese art and Communist propaganda, its walls had never been touched. But when Chien arrived in Beijing in July 1985, she brought over "rollers, trays, and 2,000 RMB [Renminbi, Chinese currency]" to have the dusty walls repainted fresh white before the installation began.[14] Rauschenberg's crew then added temporary walls and installed his freestanding and wall pieces in the space newly fashioned to Western standards.

Finally, the most shocking aspect of the show was Rauschenberg's extensive use of readymade and other contemporary art strategies that had never been seen in China before. While he used such everyday objects as umbrellas and even discarded cardboard in his creations in China, the *Kabal American Zephyr* series he had produced in the early 1980s also demonstrated his deployment of light and motion in his art. Moreover, photo transfer was visible on shiny metal plates in works from ROCI Chile, and *Japanese Clayworks*, which incorporated images of Mona Lisa and other famed paintings, demonstrated that even "art history" could be an artist's readymade material. Xu Bing (Figure 3), who saw the exhibition with his students as a young faculty member at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, recalls that it was hard to decide whether he liked Rauschenberg's work or



4. Wu Pingren, *History: Series of Conflicts*, 1985. Mixed media. From Gao Minglu, ed., *The '85 Movement: The Enlightenment of the Chinese Avant-Garde* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 1988), 290.

not, because he had nothing to compare it with. Although he knew about Duchamp's readymade, he had not seen it in person. The only thing he knew that looked remotely similar to Rauschenberg's work was a farmer's house decorated with a variety of farming tools, which he had seen in the countryside where he was sent during the Cultural Revolution. The show nonetheless left a deep impression on him, because, combined with an exhibition of North Korean art held around the same year, it gave him an occasion to think about his art and future, convincing him that he needed to get out of his environment and stop producing work in the official Chinese art style.[15]

The diversity of Rauschenberg's contemporary art strategies offered a great inspiration for other young artists as well—artists who already were forming what would be called the '85 Movement all over the country.[16] Compared with Duchamp's conceptual readymade, Rauschenberg's prolific and indiscriminate use of found objects seemed more approachable as a point of reference. Most importantly, it vividly suggested an effective alternative to "socialist realism" and "traditional art," the two dead-end avenues of expression available in Chinese art at the time. For instance, in *7 Characters*, shown as part of *ROCI China*, Rauschenberg combined traditional paper with found images of contemporary Chinese life, not in an idealized realist style but as part of formal composition. As the critic Li Xianting suggests, this approach provided Chinese artists a non-ideological, or better, a critical way to deal with their reality in artistic practice.[17] According to him, even artists outside Beijing made a trip to the capital to see *ROCI China* and many artists both inside and outside academies started

5. Robert Rauschenberg visiting *Seven-Person Exhibition*, apartment of Marlowe Hood, November 1985. A large abstraction on the right is by Zhang Wei, and the one the left is by Wan Luyan. A sculpture on the table is by Gu Dexin. Photo courtesy Zhang Wei.

playing with readymade. For instance, Wu Pingren exhibited *History: Series of Conflicts* (Figure 4) in the Xuzhuo Contemporary Art exhibition in May 1986. Although it has yet to be confirmed whether he saw *ROCI China* or not, what we might call the "Rauschenberg effect" is clearly visible in this work, for the artist incorporated art-historical references such as Mona Lisa and a plaster cast into his mixed media painting.

Such a drastic artistic impact, however, combined with Rauschenberg's personal presence in Beijing, was bound to unsettle the Chinese art scene. In particular, his encounter with the local underground artists revealed an issue of "cultural time lag," a key term to understand the ambivalence of the ROCI project. This encounter took place at an underground exhibition specifically organized for Rauschenberg, held at the apartment of an American journalist, Marlowe Hood (Figure 5). A reporter for *South China Daily*, Hood was friendly with a group of underground artists who had no official art education at academies or elsewhere. They included such painters as Zhang Wei, Ma Kelu, and Zhu Jinshi, who had been engaged with impressionistic landscape under the banner of the No Name Group in the 1970s and moved on to abstraction in the 1980s. Thinking that it would be an interesting experience for them to meet Rauschenberg, Hood arranged a private show for the American artist.

Zhang Wei was a central figure in this underground art community in Beijing (Figure 6). Since the authorities still did not permit abstraction, he held a number of underground exhibitions in his apartment, creating a cultural scene of "Apartment Art." According to the art historian Gao Minglu, the space of an apartment was a kind of totality, as it was used not only as a living space but also as a studio, salon, and exhibition space, which

could function as social critique.[18] Engaging with abstraction meant constant negotiation with government censorship at the time. While single-story houses could easily be spied on, Zhang Wei lived in the corner room on the top floor of a five-story building, a location not conducive to constant surveillance. To further lessen the risk, he devised a special way of entry. In addition to a main entrance that was watched 24 hours a day, he asked his fellows to use two emergency stairs on both sides of the building. Thus the guests would come in at different times of a day from different entrances, knock on the door as arranged, and then enjoy the private show and party.[19] Even a decade after the end of Cultural Revolution, there was not much artistic freedom. In fact, when Zhang Wei and his fellow artists ventured to hold an exhibition in public in May 1985, it was banned before it opened. Since the situation was not much different half a year later, Hood suggested using his own apartment to show their work to Rauschenberg.

6. Zhang Wei standing in front of his abstract paintings, Beijing, 1982. Photo courtesy Li Shan.

With Hood's help, Zhang Wei organized *Seven-Person Exhibition*, including Gu Dexin, Wan Luyan, Qin Yufen, and Feng Guodong as well as the two painters mentioned earlier. Interested in the "unofficial" side of Chinese art, Rauschenberg paid a visit to Hood's apartment and looked at the artists' work attentively. Despite mutual interest, however, the evening took an unexpected turn. When Rauschenberg asked Zhang Wei if he had already seen the ROCI show, the Chinese artist emphatically answered, "Yes, almost every day." Rauschenberg responded that he wanted to take Zhang Wei to the United States so that he could tell everyone how the Chinese people loved his show in Beijing. Immediately disgusted, Zhang Wei started criticizing the American artist's work, saying that the more he saw it, the less impressed he was. A quarrel broke out between the two, and Chun-Wuei Su Chien refused to translate Zhang Wei beyond that point.[20] Ma Kelu and Zhu Jinshi took sides with Zhang, whereas Gu Dexin and Wan Luyan found the

dispute unproductive.[21] The truth be told, however, Zhang Wei did like Rauschenberg's work and all the other artists appreciated his interest in their show. Why, then, did this confrontation happen at all?

This is where the issue of cultural time lag is pertinent. In the mid-1980s, the engagement with abstraction was at once extremely radical and political in China. Most likely, however, their paintings instead reminded Rauschenberg of Abstract Expressionism, whose influence he had struggled to overcome 30 years ago. Certainly, this cultural time lag, or "belatedness," always exists between the putative centers of modernity and other peripheral regions to varying degrees. But in this case, the cultural distance was further complicated by the East–West division of the Cold War era. From the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 until the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's open-door policy in 1978, China was in a state of cultural isolation. In the meantime, the contemporary art scene of the so-called Free World saw numerous trends and transitions, which, on the whole, resulted in the commercialization of art. With the economic boom and the craze for Neo-Expressionist painting, indeed, oppositional avant-garde art was already history by the mid-1980s.

This cultural divide compounded communication difficulties between the American and the Chinese artists. Furthermore, there was a huge gap between their social standings. If Zhang Wei and others had to remain underground as long as they aspired to be avant-garde, Rauschenberg was highly visible, as an internationally celebrated artist as well as a self-appointed cultural ambassador. During his stay in China, he threw a large party for government officials, and *Time* magazine decided to commission from him a portrait of Deng Xiaoping, its 1985 "Man of the Year," for its cover, a project that Chun-Wuei Su Chien proudly announced at Hood's apartment. This did not please the young Chinese artists, who were obviously anti-government.

On the cover of 6 January 1986, issue of *Time* (Figure 7), Rauschenberg combined a few photographs of the Chinese leader with images of contemporary life in China, such as numerous bicycles in a factory and a construction site. In addition, a pair of scissors cutting a ribbon celebrates the new start for China. The artist told the magazine, "Today there is a new spirit, a new curiosity, that was missing three years ago. It is a great beginning."[22] Here the double character of Rauschenberg's combine technique is clearly visible; because it is basically a neutral method, it can be used both to criticize a political situation and to praise and affirm it, depending on the circumstances. This double character echoes the double-sided nature of the ROCI project. While he was critical of the political systems of the hosting countries, Rauschenberg willingly cooperated with their governments to realize his exhibitions. This duality no doubt made Chinese artists both appreciative and skeptical of his presence.

Still, their encounter with the American artist had a fundamental impact on their subsequent careers. Zhu Jinshi recalls that the idea of meeting with Rauschenberg inspired him to propose an exhibition of soundscape installation, something those underground Chinese artists had never experimented with before and that was thus rejected. At the same time the inspiration from Rauschenberg encouraged Gu Dexin—who was thinking of quitting his artistic career at the time—to continue making art.[23] After Rauschenberg's visit, four artists out of seven left China. In 1986 Zhang Wei moved to the United States and Ma Kelu went to Germany before later settling in New York. In the same year, Zhu Jinshi and Qin Yufen left for Germany and became installation artists. Feng Guodong, Gu Dexin, and Wan Luyan stayed in China, but the last two remain internationally active after working as the Tactile Sensation Group and the New Analysts Group with Chen Shaoping. Today all the artists except for Feng Guodong, who passed away in 2005, live and work in Beijing, which has become a flourishing contemporary art center.

7. Robert Rauschenberg, Portrait of Deng Xiaoping for *Time*'s "Man of the Year," cover, 6 January 1986 © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

In lieu of a conclusion, I would like to return to a consideration of the ambiguous nature of ROCI's legacy. While its significance in American art history is considered small, ROCI became a milestone in Chinese art history, offering a much-needed catalyst for Chinese artists to think beyond their given cultural and political conditions. This case study of *ROCI China* also points to the need to connect and compare it with the reception of ROCI in other host countries in the Eastern Bloc. The significance of the larger Rauschenberg international project clearly lies in world art history and in the possibility of studying it as a link to understanding seemingly disparate developments. Just as *ROCI China* coincided with Deng Xiaoping's open-door policy in China, *ROCI USSR* coincided with Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika in the Soviet Union, and *ROCI Berlin* with the fall of the Berlin Wall. In a nutshell, it coincided with the breakdown

of the cultural blockade between the East and the West. As if to prove this point, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall contributed to the speedy realization of the *ROCI Berlin* exhibition in 1990, and in the same year, following the success of *ROCI USSR* of 1989, Rauschenberg was even included in the USSR Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.[24]

Thus, one way to reconsider the ROCI project would be to use it as a vehicle to connect and compare various "non-conformist" and "dissident" art movements in the Eastern Bloc that have so far tended to be studied separately from one another.[25] If Rauschenberg's work and presence had a critical impact on the emerging Chinese avant-garde art scene, how did the dissident artists in East Germany and the Soviet Union respond to the ROCI exhibition, and how did the artists of the Eastern Bloc as a whole experience the breakdown of the cultural blockade? These questions ultimately go beyond the East–West division of the Cold War regime, as ROCI in Latin American countries such as Chile and Venezuela, where the cultural blockade existed for a different reason but with equal intensity, would unfold other contrasting stories.[26] The varying cultural time lag is an important topic for global art studies. By going beyond the nation-based framework of art history and by talking across cultures, we can begin to assess ROCI's legacy and revaluate it for a larger history of world art.

Notes

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1. Rauschenberg pronounced the name ROCI as "Rocky" to rhyme with the name of his pet turtle and used the turtle's image as an icon for the project. The full itinerary was as follows: *ROCI Mexico*, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City (17 April–23 June 1985); *ROCI Chile*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago (17 July–18 August 1985); *ROCI Venezuela*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas (12 September–27 October 1985); *ROCI China*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing (15 November–5 December 1985); *ROCI Tibet*, Tibet Revolutionary Hall, Lhasa (2–23 December 1985); *ROCI Japan*, Setagaya Museum of Art, Tokyo (22 November–28 December 1986); *ROCI Cuba*, Museo Nacional, Casa de Las Américas, and Castillo de la Fuerza, Havana (10 February–3 April 1988); *ROCI USSR*, Tretyakov Gallery, Central House of Culture, Moscow (2 February–5 March 1989); *ROCI Berlin*, Neue Berliner Gallerie im Alten Museum, Berlin (10 March–1 April 1990); *ROCI Malaysia*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (21 May–24 June 1990); and *ROCI USA*, Washington, DC (12 May–2 September 1991).

2. See Mary Yakush, ed., *ROCI: Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1991).

3. Robert Rauschenberg, "Tobago Statement," written in October 1984. See Yakush, *ROCI*, 154.

4. Lee Fleming, "Rauschenberg Redux: The World Tour Comes Home," *Museums & Arts Washington* (May–June 1991), 54. Hank Burchard, "Rauschenberg Sinks 'Overseas,'" *Washington Post*, 10 May 1991. For another negative review, see Eric Gibson, "Rauschenberg's Exhibit Has No Artistic Luster," *Washington Times*, 10 May 1991, E8.

5. Paul Richard, "Silk Sheets and Neon Bicycles: At the National Gallery, the Extravagant 'Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange,'" *Washington Post*, 12 May 1991, G1.

6. For the significances of Rauschenberg's international activities of the 1960s, see Hiroko Ikegami, *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

7. Robert Rauschenberg and Donald Saff, "A Conversation about Art and ROCI," in Yakush, *ROCI*, 162.

8. Donald Saff, telephone interview by author, 15 July 2009. As a print artist, Saff had been to China a number of times and was a director of Graphicstudio at the University of South Florida at the time. At Rauschenberg's request, he accompanied Rauschenberg's trip to China in 1982 and later acted as ROCI's project manager.

9. See Kenworth Moffett, "American Abstract Painting after 1945," in *American Paintings from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Beijing: National Art Museum of China, 1981), 30–33. This publication is in Chinese.

10. Fei Dawei, "The Twenty Years That Served as the Beginning: Chinese Contemporary Art of the Eighties and Nineties," in *Avant-Garde China: Twenty Years of Chinese Contemporary Art* (Osaka: National Museum of Art, 2008), 25. There was also a Picasso exhibition in Beijing in 1983.

11. Chun-Wuei Su Chien, "Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange in China (Beijing and Lhasa)," unpublished memoir of *ROCI China*, dated 26 March 1986, Robert Rauschenberg Archives, New York.

12. Rauschenberg's letter of commission, dated 25 October 1984, says: "I hereby appoint and authorize Mrs. Chun-Wuei Su Chien as the curator and the sole agent in charge of selecting and arrangements for the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange exhibition in China." According to the budget drafted by Chien, she received $10,000 as a salary for 1984 and another $10,000 for 1985; Rauschenberg Archives.

13. "An Agreement between the China Exhibition Agency and the Evergreen Cultural Exchange for the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange Exhibition in China," Rauschenberg Archives. Chien signed the agreement as a director of Evergreen Cultural Exchange, an organization she set up to do the ROCI work.

14. In a letter dated 22 July 1985, Chien wrote to Donald Saff and Terry van Brandt, "I brought over rollers, trays, and 2,000 RMB for CEA [Chinese Exhibition Agency], asking them to have the gallery painted *before* ROCI installation" [emphasis by Chien]; Rauschenberg Archives.

15. Xu Bing, interview by author, 27 July 2009, Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing.

16. See Gao Minglu, ed., *The '85 Movement: The Enlightenment of Chinese Avant-Garde* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 1988), and *The '85 Movement: An Anthology of Historical Sources* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2008). These publications are in Chinese.

17. Li Xianting, interview by author, 21 July 2009, Songzhuang.

18. Gao Minglu, "What is 'Apartment Art'?" *The Ecology of Post-Cultural Revolution Frontier Art: Apartment Art in China 1970s–1990s* (Beijing: Shuimu Contemporary Art Space, 2008), 10.

19. Zhang Wei, interview by author, 23 July 2009, Beijing.

20. Ibid.

21. There was a generation gap involved in the conflict as well, because the young Chinese artists felt they had to show their independence to Rauschenberg, who was the age of their fathers. While Zhu Jinshi recalls that Rauschenberg said "Relax" more than 10 times during his visit, the American artist advised Ma Kelu to unburden himself from the heavy tradition of Chinese art—a piece of well-meant advice that was nonetheless resented by the Chinese artists as patronizing. Ma Kelu and Zhu Jinshi, interviews by author, conducted respectively on 23 and 24 July 2009, Beijing.

22. Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in Richard B. Thomas, "A Letter from the Publisher," *Time* 127, no. 1 (6 January 1986): 4.

23. Gu Dexin and Zhu Jinshi, interviews by author, conducted respectively on 23 and 24 July 2009, Beijing.

24. See Joan Young and Susan Davidson, "Chronology," in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective,* ed. Walter Hopps (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), 582–83. For *ROCI USSR*, see Pamela Kachurin, "The ROCI Road to Peace: Robert Rauschenberg, Perestroika, and the End of the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 27–43.

25. For dissident artists in the Soviet Union, see Renee Baigell and Matthew Baigell, eds., *Soviet Dissident Artists: Interviews after Perestroika*, (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), and Norton Dodge and Alla Rosenfeld, eds., *From Gulag to Glasnost: Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995). For the art of East Germany, see *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures* (New York: Abrams, 2009). This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and traveled to Nuremberg and Berlin.

26. For a detailed account of ROCI Chile, see Robert S. Mattison, *Robert Rauschenberg: Breaking Boundaries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 220–59.

Artistic Tropes

Some Cases of Mutual Chinese–American Influence

Ding Ning

Knowledge studies others,
while wisdom is self-known.
—Laotzu

That both Chinese and American artists benefit from each other's cultural and artistic production is a fact obvious to all. Their exchange of ideas about visual communication goes beyond direct imitation and has become a valuable stimulus for artistic creation. But the scholarly study of the interactive influence between Chinese and American artists is just beginning, at least in current Chinese academic circles. Some American artists were certainly inspired by Chinese culture and art, yet little in-depth research has been done on this specific influence. When historical data has been compiled, further reflection or analysis has not generally followed.

At the same time, art historians have given even less attention to the ways in which American art has influenced Chinese art—including contemporary Chinese art. We are accustomed to believe that only the art with the longer history could have an essential impact on the younger art, and not vice versa. The inclination to observe a one-way influence has been particularly powerful.

It is well known that there have been relatively straightforward imitations in the history of art. For instance, Botticelli's *Calumny* (1494–95) was perhaps the loyal echo to the original of the same title by the ancient Greek painter Apelles. Respectful imitation of the work of old masters has played a subtle but profound role in the history of Chinese painting, particularly in the elite tradition of literati art (mainly expressive painting starting from the Song dynasty). In the eyes of painters of the Ming dynasty, for example, creative or free copying was completely

different from any literary imitation as they strived to seek the style of a specific master in the past. Similarities in compositional construction and, more importantly, spiritual encounters were in the minds of smart followers. Thus Zhao Zuo and Dong Qichang could have the same master, Li Cheng, to imitate, yet the results could be substantially different.[1] Tracing artistic influence across cultures can present us with a rich and still more complex perspective. As Michael Taussig argued in his classic cross-cultural analysis *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, imitation of other cultures can be an incredibly potent form of creativity, collective knowledge, and identity formation. The "sympathetic magic" of mimesis—of imitating something from beyond one's own borders—not only enriches the imitator, but also allows the source of inspiration to see a new version of itself, to see itself through the eyes of another.[2]

In recent years, scholars have moved away from unidirectional notions of cultural influence. Yet even studies of cross-cultural interchange, such as explorations of the immigrant experience and the experience of Asian American artists, can leave the dynamics of mutual influence underdeveloped. Scholars have noted, for instance, how American Asian artists, including Isamu Noguchi or Dong Kingman, were either marginalized by the dominant society or felt an imposed stereotype of in-between-ness. But it is important to dig still deeper into the nature of their creative achievements as well as those of Euro-American artists such as Mark Tobey who came into contact with Asian art. The influence involved is not only partial and technical, but can be omnipresent and conceptual in ways that have not yet been fully explored. Norman Bryson, in his book *Tradition and Desire* (1984), used the term "tropes" to describe artistic manipulations or "turnings" of tradition that result in something new that falls between imitation and complete transformation—not so direct as the former but also not so dramatic as the latter. This idea may be helpful in considering the complex nature of artistic exchange here. As Bryson noted, tropes may also mask imitation as artists adopt different strategies for confronting the difficulties of visual innovation.[3]

Recent exhibitions, such as *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia*, organized by the Guggenheim Museum, have demonstrated the far-reaching influence of Asian aesthetic ideas on American art. Similarly, it is important to notice that within certain periods of time the influence of American art on contemporary Chinese art does not seem to have been purely an individual connection between an American artist and a Chinese counterpart, but rather a more profound and lasting process. This essay will look briefly at the influence of Chinese art on American abstractionists Mark Tobey, Isamu Noguchi, and Philip Guston, and then it will turn to the way an American realist, Andrew Wyeth, influenced a number of Chinese painters in the 1980s and 1990s. "Wyethiana" prompted these artists to create a large number of figurative works that have

become an important part of the history of contemporary Chinese art, and a unique record of transnational visual culture for an entire era.

Teng Baiye and Mark Tobey

First of all, let us deal with an example of the influence of Chinese art upon American art by looking at the relationship of Teng Baiye (1900–1980) and Mark Tobey (1890–1976). Tobey's exposure to a wide range of West and East Asian influences is well-documented in the art-historical literature, although the most significant was undoubtedly Chinese art. Teng (also known as T'eng Kwei, Teng Kuei, or Kwei Dun) not only taught Tobey Chinese painting and calligraphy, but also influenced the latter in terms of artistic concept. Unfortunately, in the history of modern Chinese art, Teng is almost forgotten; one cannot find his name and works in any available survey or art history textbooks. Despite his prolific output, few scholars today understand his real contribution to both Chinese and American art history.

A close study shows that Tobey would not have been able to encounter a more ideal artistic partner. Teng (Figure 1) was well versed in English, which was somewhat rare among Chinese artists and students, as he had studied and obtained an MFA degree at the University of Washington and had conducted a special project at Yenching Institute, Harvard University, with the recommendation of John Leighton Stuart, president of Yenching University, Peiping. From 1927 to 1928, he was invited to teach at the University of Washington after acquiring his master's degree; very possibly he was the first Chinese artist to teach in an American or European higher educational institution.[4] Teng had studied western art, but greatly preferred traditional Chinese art and created a large number of excellent water-and-ink works and finger-paintings, some of which were exhibited by the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago in 1930. He also lectured and published in English, giving straight-to-the-point opinions on both Chinese and Western art.[5]

Teng was among only a few modern Chinese artists who were highly acclaimed in the West. By 1930, he had had solo painting shows in the Henry Art Gallery at Washington University (1928), in New York, and at the East West Fine Art Gallery, San Francisco. But his most important show was the one-person exhibition in November 1930 at the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. Since its founding in 1915, the society has been an important museum devoted to contemporary art. Directed by the artist Eva Watson-Schütze, it held an influential exhibition in 1934, in which Georges Braque, Jean (Hans) Arp, Constantin Brancusi, Joan Miró, and Pablo Picasso participated. One-person shows there featured the work of such celebrated figures as Henri Matisse (1930), Alexander Calder (1934), and Fernand Léger (1936).[6] Berthold Laufer, curator of Asiatic ethnology and anthropology at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, introduced Teng to the Renaissance Society, and he may have prompted the exhibition,

1. *Portrait of T'eng K'uei with dedication to Mark Tobey*, 1926. University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, Special Collections, UW 23723z.

which was co-sponsored by the American Friends of China. A Chinese context was provided: along with the exhibition of the artist's paintings, examples of antique Chinese art were displayed. Chinese consul-general Koliang Yih was a guest of honor at the opening of the "Exhibition of the Paintings of Teng Kwei," and Laufer offered remarks.[7] Teng's artistic talent was extremely far-reaching; he also was a sculptor, and in 1931 he designed the Chinese Nationality Room in the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh.[8]

The relationship between Teng Baiye and Mark Tobey was not in the category of ordinary friends. In 1923 the two men met in Seattle, where Tobey had recently settled. Tobey became fascinated by Chinese painting and calligraphy, which helped the budding artist forge his distinct style. In 1934, after visits to Naples, Italy, and Hong Kong, Tobey made his way by boat to see Teng in Shanghai, and his old friend probably offered him a home stay in the French Concession there, where Tobey continued his studies of Chinese art under the instruction of his long-term tutor. He also visited Japan that year. By 1938, when Teng wrote to Tobey for the last time, China was suffering from the Japanese invasion. He had stopped painting and was devoting himself to the anti-Japanese war by participating in the refugee industrial movement in the camps of Guilin. One can feel rather touched by the unusual friendship conveyed between the lines of his only surviving letter to Tobey.[9]

Only in 1935 did Tobey start his so-called white writing, the innovative network of white lines against a dark background that cover the surface of his work. That happened after his discovery of traditional ink brushwork in China and in Japan, where he found himself freed from form by "the calligraphic impulse I had received in China."[10] How might Chinese art have influenced him to discover his own visual tropes and distinguish himself stylistically as an outstanding artist?

In his lectures and papers, Teng emphasized the expressive quality of line in Chinese art, and Tobey went further by getting rid of any mass with certain configurations of lines, reinforcing such expressiveness. Tobey wrote,

> *All is in motion now. . . . [T]he tree in front of my studio in Seattle is all rhythm, lifting, springing upward! I have just had my first lesson in Chinese brush from my friend and artist Teng Kwei. The tree is no more a solid in the earth, breaking into lesser solids in the earth, breaking into lesser solids bathed in chiaroscuro. There is pressure and release. Each movement, like tracks in the snow, is recorded and often loved for itself. The Great Dragon is breathing sky, thunder and shadow; wisdom and spirit vitalized.*[11]

According to this perception of nature, form is dematerialized and composed of *qi,* the ever-changing currents of cosmic energy. The French newspaper *Le Monde*, in reporting years later on the death of Mark Tobey, commented that it was owing to Teng Baiye's instruction that the American painter acquired an insightful perspective on Far Eastern art and reached a completely new pattern in his own work.[12] It can be said that his "white writing" style guided this very natural artist's mind, or more exactly, universalist thinking, up to a freer level.

Tobey kept experimenting with lines and tried to pursue any possibly subtle variations in them. The spontaneity and vitality conveyed in his early white writing compositions was still evident in his much later works like *Advance of History* (Figure 2). Arguably, the wild impulses of line in the earlier *Broadway Norm* (1935) developed into the more delicate and intricate configuration of lines with dazzling widths, densities, directions, and colors.

Much has been made of Tobey's use of all-over composition. This was one aspect that was not very common in traditional Chinese painting, however—particularly literati painting—as much more blank space is emphasized to give viewers room for imagination. Further, Tobey did not provide a kind of distinct figure-and-ground relationship within his compositions; thus there was no visual focus or pivot, only the freedom of permitting viewers to have a wandering vision that could not easily pause and repeat.[13]

2. Mark Tobey, *Advance of History*, 1964. Gouache and watercolor on paper, 25 5/8 × 19 11/16 in. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice © 2011 Estate of Mark Tobey/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Tobey's works in this mode, then, are indebted to but distinct

from the use of lines in the Chinese art that inspired them—both the Chinese art of the literati and the paintings of his mentor, Teng, himself deeply traditional. It is interesting to ask what influence Teng may have received from Tobey, a promising artist 10 years his senior. There is no doubt that Teng was good at absorbing Western art, and his later achievement in sculpture convincingly proved that. Is it because he learned so much about Western art that he then more firmly endorsed traditional Chinese art? Due to the lack of firsthand data, it is difficult to tackle this truly intriguing question.

Noguchi and Guston

Not only does the case of Mark Tobey and Teng Baiye deserve more extensive and penetrating research, but other cases should also be more carefully examined. For example, the American sculptor and designer Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988) seemed to have benefited from Chinese art as well as from Japanese art. No one knows why and how Noguchi visited Beijing in 1930. The artist himself was reluctant to dwell on his trip to China, and the whole issue became somehow mysterious. It is a little difficult to understand why he was so well received in Beijing, and what led to his being able to indulge in such a luxurious lifestyle. He employed a private cook who could speak French and cook French cuisine, a houseboy, and even a rickshaw boy. Unbelievably, despite being half Japanese, he became acquainted with General Zhang Xueliang and his men, who hated Japan. As for the arts, Noguchi quite willingly recalled 28 years later, in 1958, his eight-month stay in Beijing and two unforgettable things that happened to him.

The first striking experience for him concerned the magnificent monumental Temple of Heaven (Altar of Heaven), part of an imperial complex in Beijing. According to the scholar Dore Ashton, he deemed it to be a manifestation of the ancient Chinese worldview, which considered the earth to be an immense square in a universe moving in a circular orbit. As Ashton noted, the great marble square contains circular terraces leading to a final open terrace, which forms the Altar of Heaven proper: "These would be the first of many stone terraces in Noguchi's wandering life whose symbolism engraved itself in his visual memory and emerged, eventually, in his own terrace inventions," she commented. "The square and the circle—figures that had taken on aesthetic values specific to the modern movement in the Paris Noguchi had just left—were now perceived in their most ancient splendor."[14]

The second important event was his learning experience with the Chinese painting master Qi Baishi, then 70 years old. It was said that Noguchi concentrated on flower-and-bird painting at a neophyte's level. But he did more: he sensitively and successfully grasped the temporal sensibility of these works, by which I mean, for example, the qual-

ity and rhythm of lines made with ink and water and the way they offer a strong sense of time; this aided his pursuit of abstract art in both sculpture and design.[15]

It should be said that China's influence on Noguchi did not take the form of mimesis in his later works, but instead was synthesized and modified into something new that demonstrated the artist's superb capacity for absorbing and transforming foreign art.

The emulation of Chinese painting and aesthetics by Philip Guston (1913–1980) presents a similar case. As an Abstract Expressionist, Guston offered a pertinent and brilliant analysis of Chinese Song Dynasty painting, which makes one speculate that the artist must have had a long history of viewing the best Chinese paintings, or that there were some cognoscenti guiding him in secret in the appreciation of Song dynasty painting. He commented, for example:

> *I think in my studies and broodings about the art of the past my greatest ideal is Chinese painting, especially Sung painting dating from about the 10th or 11th century. Sung period training involves doing something thousands and thousands of times—bamboo shoots and birds—until someone else does it, not you, and the rhythm moves through you. I think that is what the Zen Buddhists called satori and I have had it happen to me. It is a double activity, when you know and don't know."*[16]

It remains an intriguing question as to how Guston could have developed so refined and incisive a sensibility for Chinese painting. But, more significantly, no matter how he approached Chinese art, Guston aspired to express boundless and playful elaborations in his work based on his own understanding of the specific influence, rather than to take direct nourishment from Chinese culture such as Song painting and the poetry of Li Bai.[17] In so doing, his abstract expressionist works became more bewitching.

Indeed, the influence of Chinese artists' on their American counterparts is an intriguing arena of study.

Wyeth in China

Now let us turn to the influence of American art upon Chinese artists. Perhaps there is no more convincing case than the art of Andrew Wyeth.

On 31 January 2009, the sixth day of the Chinese Spring Festival, the most important and cheerful holiday of the year, the only art weekly in China, *meishu bao,* broke with convention and reported the sad news that Andrew Wyeth had passed away two weeks before. "His works," the reporter noted, "can be said to have influenced our seventies to eighties of the last century and even today's China." Chinese oil painter Yang Feiyun put it this way: "I guess, many Chinese painters would feel much sadder than those in the West about the death of Wyeth."[18]

3. Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World*, 1948. Tempera on gessoed panel, 32 1/4 × 47 3/4 in. Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase © Andrew Wyeth. Photo © Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York.

Indeed, the art of Andrew Wyeth (1917–2009) resonated with Chinese artists after the Cultural Revolution and blew a kind of Wyethiana across China. During the 1980s and 1990s in China, Wyeth was considered one of the most famous foreign painters, akin to Courbet, Delacroix, and van Gogh. During this period, his work was often denigrated by American critics, who had come over recent decades to prefer abstract, pop, minimal, conceptual, and identity art.

The reasons why Wyeth became such an influential figure for a group of Chinese oil painters in the 1980s are not complicated to list. Obviously, the top reason was that after the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, a more and more powerful artistic trend emerged—sentimental realism—which led to the production of an important part of the so-called Trauma Art. The brave transition from the Cultural Revolution art to the realistic spirit with humanistic concerns resulted in some very touching artwork. Since the depressing, 10-year-long Cultural Revolution had recently concluded, however, the critical inclination in art had to be mild, indirect, and suggestive. As soon as some Chinese artists saw Andrew Wyeth's work—certainly only photographic reproductions were available back then—they were overwhelmed. It resonated powerfully with their experiences and feelings. No doubt, the solemn but at the same time sentimental mood, the lonely figures and isolated scenes depicted in Wyeth's works seemed the perfect models for Chinese artists to follow. In particular, *Christina's World* (Figure 3) proved to be a fascinating example. The individual loneliness, sentiment, and hope emphasized in this painting looked strikingly real and moving to the eyes of Chinese painters, who had been confined so long to the false passion of the Cultural Revolution. To be closer to Andrew Wyeth's world amounted to a rebellion against the Red-Bright-Shining style that had prevailed then.

Perhaps the most brilliant response was *Spring Wind Has Been Awakened* (Figure 4) created by He Duoling (b. 1948), then a young student at Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts in Chongqing. The artist took three months to finish this work, not only bringing out his mature style for the first time but also contributing a landmark work to the history of Chinese oil painting after the Cultural Revolution. The painting looks like the typical Wyethian world: early spring, a young girl, shabbily clothed, sitting on the river bank with withered grass planted

4. He Duoling, *Spring Wind Has Been Awakened*, 1982. Oil on canvas, 37 $^{2}/_{5}$ × 50 $^{4}/_{5}$ in. National Art Museum of China, Beijing.

all over. She gazes into the far distance perplexedly but affectionately, and the spring breeze blows her black hair. There is also Wyethian pathos and promise: the severe winter is over and new life is coming, like the spring breeze blowing over wilderness and the plain now turning green. He Duoling talked about Wyeth's influence on a few occasions, saying that he loved this sentimental American realist for the latter's cool meditation and lonely but enchanting horizon. In a November 2001 interview with a journalist in Shanghai, he said:

> Spring Wind Has Been Awakened *was my MA graduation work. My supervisor . . . was not in favor of it, so I painted it in secret. Because within the painting there were no plot and narration. . . . I sneaked off to leave for Chengdu and painted secretly. I imitated the way that Wyeth painted, as blades of grass were painted one by one. This seemed a departure from the traditional realist techniques. They said my work was a marked failure. Later, I submitted it to an exhibition in Beijing and it was rejected as they said the mood embodied in the painting was rather subdued, and the girl's facial expression looked rather melancholy.*[19]

Despite its initial rejection, however, the painting was soon published on the front cover of *Fine Art, meishu*, the leading art journal in China, and a year later was accepted into France's Spring Salon. He Duoling said he felt that "[his] paintings

5. He Duoling, *Youth*, 1984. Oil on canvas, 59 1/16 × 73 1/4 in. National Art Museum of China, Beijing.

were awakened after the painting, *Spring Wind Has Been Awakened,*" and he painted more lyrical and highly acclaimed works such as *Youth* (Figure 5), *Snow Goose,* and *A House with a Loft*.[20]

He Duoling visited the United States in 1985. After viewing He Duoling's exhibition in Boston, a visitor recommended to him a book of poetry by Robinson Jeffers that was illustrated with desolate and lonely scenes shot by Edward Weston and Ansel Adams.[21] This book offered another angle for He Duoling to experience some of the sentiments he found in Wyeth's paintings. He sighed: "[T]he best oil painters are still those foreigners and I think that so far there is no single master in China, not at all."[22] In 1997 in his preface to the *Album of He Duolin*, *Contemporary Chinese Art Collection* (volume 4), he also wrote quite suggestively: "[M]y canvas is almost always having (or keeping) no more than one figure"—a Wyethian parallel. But when he finally visited Andrew Wyeth's *Christina's World* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1985, examining Wyeth's distinctive tempera strokes, He Duolin was able to see more clearly some of the differences between this American master and himself.[23]

Other talented Chinese painters such as Ai Xuan and Wang Yidong were also deeply interested in the poetic melancholy of Andrew Wyeth, and their painting depicted ordinary people of merit and dignity, contributing masterpieces to the evolving history of contemporary Chinese art.

Ai Xuan (b. 1947), famous for portraying Tibetan people, learned of Andrew Wyeth from another painter, Chen Yifei, in 1981, and in 1988 had an opportunity to meet Wyeth. It seemed that the American artist had been impressed with a display of Ai's paintings he saw at Hefner Galleries in New York. Wyeth's son, James, also a painter, contacted Ai, then a one-year visiting scholar at Oklahoma City University, and invited him to visit his father at the Brandywine River Museum (Figure 6). At their meeting, Andrew Wyeth discussed Ai's works with his Chinese admirer and other visitors. Ai was presented with two Wyeth exhibition catalogues, which Andrew and James Wyeth signed. Andrew Wyeth wrote: "To Ai Xuan: Warmest greeting from his American friend" on one and, more impressively, on the other: "To Ai Xuan: With highest regard to

your paintings."[24] As Ai recalled later after returning home in Beijing, Andrew Wyeth also encouraged him by telling him: "Now there are so many artists in America [who] rely on photographs when painting, but you are different from them, as you control photographs with your emotions."[25] Ai, even today, regards Wyeth as the greatest artist in the history of American art. He believes that Wyeth and his painter friends in China share many similar characteristics in terms of conveying human feelings, and that he was able to find much of what he wanted to say in Andrew Wyeth's paintings. In the early 1980s, Ai, still very young, was inspired to paint works like the influential *Shepherd, The Morning Mist over Marshes*. Later, he combined Wyethian melancholy with his Tibetan subject matter and deliberately expressed a kind of poetic touch in *Seasonal Wind in Zoige*, *Fence, Maybe the Sky still So Blue,* and *Cold Rain* (Figure 7).

6. Andrew Wyeth, left, meeting Ai Xuan, right, at Brandywine River Museum on 17 February 1988. Photo courtesy Ai Xuan.

7. Ai Xuan, *Cold Rain*, 1983. Oil on canvas, 33 7/16 × 23 5/8 in. Private collection.

In 2008 the painter Wang Yidong (b. 1955) also visited New York and made his way to Pennsylvania to pay tribute to Andrew Wyeth's hometown and to view his works in museums. In Wang Yidong's oil paintings, Wyethian sentiment and scene are almost omnipresent.

The significance of the art of Andrew Wyeth lies not only in its realistic painting techniques but also in his aesthetic attitude. He offered Chinese painters artistic strategies for new forms of individual expression and contemplation. He helped

them to newly consider the essentiality of paying attention to one's mental universe and the aesthetic power of conveying the pursuit of one's soul—rather than secular reality. One can certainly say that Wyeth offered a generation of Chinese artists an inspiring way of looking at the world and life—something that transcended direct stylistic imitation. Those painters, inspired by Wyeth, presented a new vision to Chinese audiences, whose experience had been confined to Cultural Revolution art.

In our era, the exchange of artistic languages and the rise of transnational artistic achievements have become a more positive phenomenon, which reminds us that references to other cultures and art extend beyond direct imitation to larger concerns and should be considered on a global level. The great Indian sage Rabindranath Tagore said: "We must prepare the field for the cooperation of all the cultures of the world where all will give and take from others. This is the keynote of the coming age."[26] What foresight indeed!

Notes

For the epigraph, see Witter Bynner, *The Way of Life: According to Laotzu, An American Version* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), 46.

1. See James Cahill, *The Distant Mountains: Chinese Painting of the Late Ming Dynasty, 1570–1644* (New York: Weatherhill Inc., 1982), chapter 4.

2. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. xii–xiv, 19.

3. See Dore Ashton, *Noguchi: East and West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 16; and Gordon H. Chang, "Emerging from the Shadow: The Visual Arts and Asian American History," *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): ix–xv. Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), xvii–xviii, 39, 41.

4. See Zheng Yimei, *Yi tan bai ying* [A Hundred Images of the Art Arena] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Calligraphy and Painting Publishing House, 1982), and David Clarke, "Teng Baiye and Mark Tobey: Interactions between Chinese and American Art in Shanghai and Seattle," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 93 (Fall 2002): 171.

5. On the 1930 exhibition, see www.renaissancesociety.org/site/Exhibitions/Works.267.html. The artist's works displayed included *Russian General, Landscape, Three Ducks, Lotos, Dragon Head, The Ball, Chinese Scholar, Crane, Figure Striding, Vine,* and *Willows*. Teng Kwei, "Art in Modern China," *The Open Court* (Chicago: December, 1933), reprinted in Bao Mingxin and Wang Ruihua, *The Lost Pearl in Painting Arena: Teng Baiye Studies* [huatan yizhu: tengbaiye yanjiu] (Shanghai: Donghua University Press, 2008), 73–104.

6. See Clarke, "Teng Baiye and Mark Tobey," 171.

7. "Renaissance Society Sponsors Unique Chinese Exhibition," *Hyde Park Herald*, 31 October 1930, 4. Teng Baiye also participated in the Group Exhibition of Paintings, Sculpture and Drawings by American and Foreign Artists, 1929, at the Brooklyn Museum; his lithograph *Rocky Landscape* was accepted at the Second International Exhibition of Lithography and Wood Carving at the Art Institute of Chicago, from 4 December 1930 to 25 January 1931; and he was one of only two Chinese artists attending the exhibition. His *Rain on the Yangtse*, another lithograph, is in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

8. Teng Baiye majored in sculpture, though one can no longer view any of his original three-dimensional works, as none have survived to the present day. Senior historian Zheng Yimei recalled that in 1935 there was a nationwide art competition for the best portrait sculpture of Sun Yat-sen. Teng Baiye was listed first among many rivals, including Li Jinfa, Jiang Xiaojian, Wang Linyi, Lang Lu

Sun, Liu Kaiqu, and Liang Zuting—the major Chinese sculptors of the time. See Chen Houcheng, *Smile at the Lip of Death: Biography of Li Jinfa* (Shanghai Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1996), 150–51.

9. Teng Kwei's letter addressed to Mark Tobey from Hankou, China, dated July 10, 1938, is in Wesley Wehr's private collection. Its Chinese translation is available at *Lion Art* [xiongshi meishu], no. 11, 1991, Taipei.

10. See William C. Seitz, *Mark Tobey* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 50–51.

11. Mark Tobey, "Reminiscence and Reverie," *Magazine of Art* 44 (October 1951): 230.

12. See *Le Monde*, 27 April 1976.

13. See, for example, David Clarke, "The All-Over Image: Meaning in Abstract Art," *Journal of American Studies* 27 (1993): 355–75, esp. 365–71. doi:10.1017/S0021875800032072.

14. Ashton, *Noguchi: East and West*, 29.

15. Ibid., 28–30, 37, 60, 98, and 234.

16. See Dore Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 185–86.

17. Ibid., 124.

18. "Andrew Wyeth Passed Away," *Art Weekly* [meishu bao], 31 January 2009, 4. For Yang Feiyun's quote, see http://art.china.cn/zixun/2009-01/23/content_2703017.htm.

19. See Hui Lan, "Realism in Chinese Oil Painting—Interview with Jin Shangyi, He Duoling, Ai Xuan, and Xu Mangyao," *Art Observation*, no. 2, 2002.

20. See *meishu*, no. 12, 1981. Hui Lan, "Realism in Chinese Oil Painting."

21. Presumably, it is Robinson Jeffers's *Not Man Apart: Photographs of the Big Sur Coast*, Sierra Club, 1965.

22. See Zhou Wenhan, He Duoling, "I Belong to the Misreading Generation," *Beijing News* [xin jing bao], 3 January 2006.

23. *Album of He Duolin, Contemporary Chinese Art Collection*, vol. 4 (Mountain Art Museum, Gaoxiong, 1997), 7, 16.

24. The catalogues Andrew Wyeth presented, *An American Vision: Three Generations of Wyeth Art,* (Boston: Little Brown, 1987) and *The Art of Andrew Wyeth* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Art Society, 1973), are still carefully kept by Ai Xuan.

25. Ai Xuan, *What Wyeth Said to Me*, http://art.china.cn/mjda/2009-03/09/content_2777141.htm; and "Meeting Andrew Wyeth," *Fine Arts in China* [zhongguo meishu bao], no. 3, 1989: 1.

26. Quoted in Paul Judson Braisted, *Cultural Cooperation: Keynote of the Coming Age* (New Haven, CT: The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, 1945), 5.

Cultural Translation and Creative Misunderstanding in the Art of Wenda Gu

David Cateforis

One of the major Chinese-born avant-garde artists of his generation, Wenda Gu (b. Shanghai, 1955) began his career as part of the '85 Movement in China, relocated to the United States in 1987, and achieved international renown in the 1990s.[1] Since the late 1990s Gu has spent increasing amounts of time back in China participating in that country's booming contemporary art scene; he now largely divides his time between Brooklyn and Shanghai. This transnational experience has led Gu to create numerous art works dealing with East–West interchange. This paper introduces and briefly analyzes two of his recent projects, *Forest of Stone Steles—Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry* (1993–2005), and *Cultural Transference—A Neon Calligraphy Series* (2004–7), both of which explore creatively certain problems and paradoxes of attempts to translate between Chinese and English languages and cultures.

A full understanding of these projects requires some knowledge of the work that first gained Gu international recognition, his *united nations* series of installations, begun in 1993.[2] The series consists of a sequence of what Gu calls "monuments," made principally of human hair fashioned into such elements as bricks, carpets, and curtains, and combined to create large quasi-architectural installations. Comprising national monuments made from hair collected within a single country and installed there, and transnational or "universal" monuments made of hair collected from around the world, Gu's series uses blended human hair to suggest the utopian possibility of human unification through biological merger. At the same time, many works in the series, such as the iconic *united nations—babel of the millennium* (Figure 1) feature unreadable scripts based on English, Hindi, Arabic, and ancient Chinese seal script, which symbolize

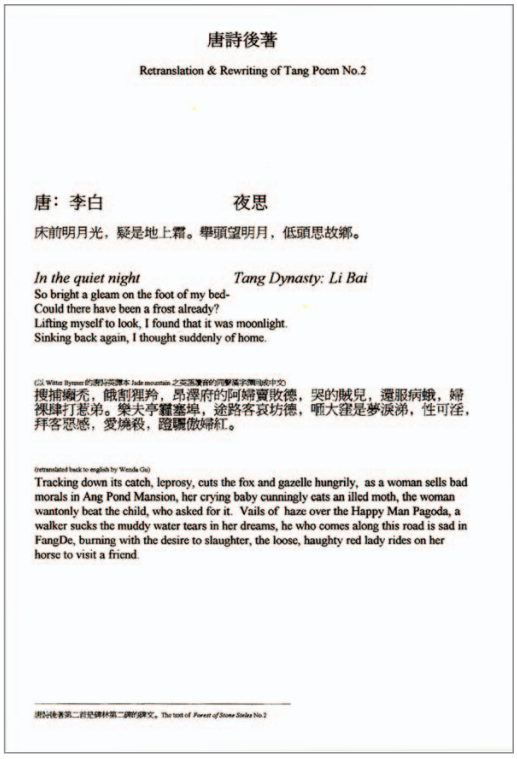
1. Wenda Gu, *united nations—babel of the millennium*, 1999. Site-specific installation: human hair, glue, and twine, height: 75 ft., diameter: 34 ft. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Kent and Vicky Logan Family Gift. Photo courtesy Wenda Gu.

the reality of linguistic and other cultural differences that continue to divide humanity.[3]

The largest pseudo-characters in this *united nations* monument are synthesized from elements of ancient Chinese seal script and English letters; they are hybrid characters that evoke the cultural fusion brought about by globalization. Wenda Gu is fascinated by the ways in which globalization, with its emphasis on transnational exchange in every sphere of human activity, necessitates translation between different languages and cultures, often resulting in misunderstanding. The artist himself cultivates cross-cultural confusion by using both the names Wenda Gu (in the West) and Gu Wenda (in Asia), while his imperfect English leads him to commit frequent misspellings and grammatical mistakes. Turning this situation to his advantage, he sees such misunderstanding as a positive force, declaring: "Only through the misunderstanding can we create the new!"[4] On this basis Gu conceived of an ambitious long-term

2. Wenda Gu, *Forest of Stone Steles—Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry*, 1993–2005. Installation view, OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, China, November 2005. Photo by Ye Niu, courtesy Wenda Gu.

project paralleling the *united nations* series: *Forest of Stone Steles—Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry* (Figure 2), which employs a process he calls "Complex Chinese-English Translation" to create new "post-Tang" poems in Chinese and English out of the Tang originals and their English translations.[5]



唐詩後著

Retranslation & Rewriting of Tang Poem No.2

唐：李白　　夜思

床前明月光，疑是地上霜。舉頭望明月，低頭思故鄉。

In the quiet night　　*Tang Dynasty: Li Bai*

So bright a gleam on the foot of my bed-
Could there have been a frost already?
Lifting myself to look, I found that it was moonlight.
Sinking back again, I thought suddenly of home.

(注: White Bynner 的漢詩英譯本 Jade mountain 之英語譯文的回譯英文譯詩(由中文)

搜捕癩禿，餓刮狸狌，昂潭府的阿婦賣敗德，哭的賊兒，還服病餓，婦裸肆打惹弟。樂夫亭霾塞埠，途路客哀坊德，哺大窪是夢淚涕，性可淫，拜客惡感，愛燒殺，蹬驕傲婦紅。

(retranslated back to english by Wenda Gu)

Tracking down its catch, leprosy, cuts the fox and gazelle hungrily, as a woman sells bad morals in Ang Pond Mansion, her crying baby cunningly eats an illed moth, the woman wantonly beat the child, who asked for it. Vails of haze over the Happy Man Pagoda, a walker sucks the muddy water tears in her dreams, he who comes along this road is sad in FangDe, burning with the desire to slaughter, the loose, haughty red lady rides on her horse to visit a friend.

(附注:後著第二首是碑林第二碑的碑文。The text of *Forest of Stone Steles* No.2

3. Wenda Gu, *Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poem No. 2.* Reproduced from *Translating Visuality—Wenda Gu: Forest of Stone Steles, Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry* (Shenzhen, China: OCT-Contemporary Art Terminal of He Xiangning Art Museum, 2005), 124. Photo by Ye Niu.

In contrast to the *united nations* series, which seeks to transcend cultural specificity, and even the notion of biological difference as a marker of culture, as it aims at universal inclusiveness, the *Forest of Stone Steles* series is deeply rooted in Chinese cultural traditions, which it creatively transforms. Inspired by the famous Forest of Stone Steles Museum in Xi'an, which displays thousands of steles spanning Chinese history, Gu's work comprises 50 hand-carved and engraved slate steles, each weighing 1.3 tons, and 2,500 ink rubbings made from their surfaces. After several years of planning, a team of expert craftsmen under Gu's employ in Xi'an produced the steles and rubbings through traditional methods beginning in 2000. The completed series was displayed in November 2005 in a grand installation at the OCT-Contemporary Art Terminal in Shenzhen.[6]

Whereas traditional steles stand upright, Gu's are horizontal, evoking the toppling of tradition and referencing death through their resemblance to tomb slabs.[7] Historical steles typically bore engraved epitaphs, imperial or official inscriptions, historical records, philosophical or literary texts, or examples of the writing of famous calligraphers. Departing from such precedents to introduce an alternation between languages, each of Gu's steles and rubbings presents a series of poetic texts in Chinese and English that switch between vertical and horizontal formats to signal the alternation between cultures.

To help the reader follow the description of the stele layout, I reproduce here both the word-processed starting point (Figure 3), which presents all of the texts horizontally, and the rubbing of the corresponding finished stele (Figure 4), which presents the texts in alternating vertical and horizontal orientation. The first text is

4. Wenda Gu, *Forest of Stone Steles—Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry, No. 2*, ca. 2001. Ink rubbing on rice paper, 71 × 38 in. Reproduced from *Translating Visuality—Wenda Gu: Forest of Stone Steles, Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry* (Shenzhen, China: OCT-Contemporary Art Terminal of He Xiangning Art Museum, 2005), 125. Photo by Ye Niu.

a classic Tang dynasty poem in its original Chinese form, presented in a vertical column at the upper right, based on a viewing position from the bottom, short end of the stele. Characters in Gu's own calligraphy introduce the poem, which is engraved in characters that emulate the printed Fang Song typeface. The second text, presented horizontally in engraved Times New Roman typeface, is an English translation of the Tang poem by the American poet Witter Bynner, from his 1929 collection *The Jade Mountain*. The third text, presented vertically in large characters in Gu's distinctive calligraphy in the stele's center, is Gu's retranslation of Bynner's English back into Chinese on the basis of sound rather than meaning: it is a transliteration rendered through Chinese characters whose Mandarin pronunciation approximates the sounds of Bynner's English.[8] The result is a bizarre surrealist text that Gu calls a "post-Tang" poem. The fourth text is Gu's retranslation of the post-Tang Chinese poem into English on the basis of meaning, which makes the absurdity accessible to English readers. It is again presented horizontally and engraved in Times New Roman typeface. The fifth text, vertically engraved in the Fang Song typeface (found only on the stele and not in the word-processed version), is a Chinese "footnote" explaining Gu's unique translation process.

The alternation in the steles between Chinese and English texts and between vertical and horizontal textual formats reflects the artist's transnational experience of moving back and forth frequently between the United States and China. So too does Gu's "Complex Chinese-English Translation" process, which uses the transliteration of English into Chinese to create new meanings. This method springs from the common transliteration of Western brand names into Mandarin through the use of characters whose pronunciation mimics the sounds of the Western language. Mandarin being rich in homophones, there exist numerous possibilities for

transliterating the same Western word through entirely different characters. This can produce a nonsensical string of characters used simply for their sound, as in 麦当劳 *mai dang lao* for McDonald's, which means "wheat should toil." Careful transliteration can sometimes create a wonderfully appropriate new meaning in the target language, however; Coca Cola, for instance, is transliterated as 可口可乐 *ke kou ke le*, meaning "soothes the mouth and brings joy to the drinker."[9]

Gu's use of the process in the *Forest of Stone Steles* is closer to the first example in its creation of absurdity, essentially mocking serious attempts to translate poetry such as Bynner's. This can be seen by following the sequence of texts devised by Gu for stele no. 2 (Figure 3). Following the original Chinese, the second text is Bynner's translation of Li Bai's poem "In the Quiet Night." This is followed by Gu's transliteration of Bynner's words into Mandarin, here given in pinyin, the current standard romanization system for modern Chinese:

> *sou bu lai tu, e ge li ling, ang ze fu de a fy mai bai de, ku de zei er,*
> *hai fu bing e,*
> *fu luo si da re di. le fu ting mai se fu, tu lu ke ai fang de, za da wa shi*
> *meng lei ti,*
> *xing ke yin bai ke e gan, ai shao sha, deng li ao fu hong.*[10]

Read aloud in Mandarin, these sounds mimic those of Bynner's English words but make little sense in Chinese. The final text is Gu's free translation of the nonsensical Chinese "post-Tang" poem back into English.

The laughter provoked by the post-Tang poem is fitting: Gu's work is basically a form of creative play. Philosophically, it seeks to demonstrate that while meaning can be translated, culture (such as a poem) cannot; the attempt to translate culture always results in misunderstanding, and often in absurdity, which is nevertheless creative in its own right. In other words, translation engenders creative transformation.

The steles also display Gu's creativity as a calligrapher in their central columns of engraved characters, evoking the traditional carving of master calligraphy in stone to preserve it for posterity. Analysis of the distinctive features of Gu's calligraphy is beyond the scope of this paper; I will simply note that his style incorporates elements of ancient script styles (seal and clerical script) which give it a bold, archaic flavor. The use of the steles to produce ink rubbings, traditionally meant to reproduce and disseminate prized calligraphy, reinforces the connection of Gu's writing to that of honored calligraphers of the past.[11] Through these references Gu presents his own calligraphy as worthy of preservation, admiration, and perhaps even induction into the canon of great Chinese calligraphy. But the absurd

5. Wenda Gu, *Cultural Transference—A Neon Calligraphy Series: University of Pittsburgh (The Poem of the University of Pittsburgh)*, 2004. Neon, plexiglass, transformers, 2 ft. × 13 ft. 6 in. University Art Gallery, University of Pittsburgh. Photo courtesy Main Art Gallery, California State University, Fullerton.

6. Wenda Gu, *Cultural Transference—A Neon Calligraphy Series: Sotheby's*, 2005. Neon, plexiglass, transformers, 5 ft. × 16 ft. 5 in. Collection of the artist. Photo courtesy Wenda Gu.

content of the writing itself defends Gu against charges of hubris; he can claim that he is only kidding and that the impressive historicizing presentation of his writing is only meant to throw its literary lightness into relief.

Around the time he was completing his *Forest of Stone Steles*, Gu embarked on a complementary project that he came to call *Cultural Transference—A Neon Calligraphy Series*. Reproduced here are two of the five works in that series, subtitled *University of Pittsburgh* (Figure 5) and *Sotheby's* (Figure 6).[12] In both of them, Gu employs the same creative process of "Complex English-Chinese Translation" he developed for the steles, now taking as verbal starting points the names of a Western institution (University of Pittsburgh) and of a corporation (Sotheby's), written in small yellow roman neon letters in the top register. Both signs present in their center register large outlined red neon characters in Gu's own calligraphy that transliterate the sounds of the Western names into Mandarin Chinese. In the bottom register, we find new English poems that Gu created by translating the Chinese back into English. "University of Pittsburgh" becomes "shinny [*sic*] neon flows on colourful silk green china treasure pavilion" and "Sotheby's" becomes "simple thoughts green temple."

These neons take a very different verbal starting point than do the steles—a modern institutional or commercial name rather than a classic Tang poem, which through Gu's translation process yields much shorter new Chinese and English texts that can be consumed quickly. And these texts are rendered in a very different medium: colorful glowing neon rather than somber engraved steles and ink rubbings. These features connect the *Neon Calligraphy* series to the modern urban commercial environment rather than the classical Chinese past—to the bustling street with its punchy advertising language rather than the hushed museum or library.[13] Gu intends his neons to translate "the

ancient treasure of calligraphy" into a glamorous contemporary medium.[14] He seeks thus to rejuvenate an art long central to Chinese culture that in Gu's view has lost much of its popularity, especially among the young. Appropriating a commercial medium for a cultural purpose, Gu's neons advertise calligraphy (his own calligraphy) as an art form, investing it with a level of importance similar to that claimed for it in different terms by the engraved steles and ink rubbings.

Gu exercised considerable ingenuity in creating the *Sotheby's* neon, which he made independent of any commission, during the buildup to Sotheby's first-ever New York auction of contemporary Chinese art in March 2006.[15] He broke the company's name down into the fragments presented on four separate plexiglass-backed panels: so/the/by'/s; transliterated these as 素思碧寺 *su si bi si*; and then translated the characters as "simple thoughts green temple."[16] The neon presents these elements in horizontal rows, while a fifth panel at the right bears a vertical line of characters and a seal serving as Gu's signature.[17] In its medium and format, Gu's neon strongly resembles a commercial sign of the sort commonly seen in a Chinese street—a sign including English alongside Chinese as a way of attracting English-speaking customers. The concluding large character (寺) of Gu's neon highlights the similarity of its layout to a Buddhist temple sign.[18] Consistent with the commercial connotations of its medium, Gu's neon also resembles a shop sign, or the four-character signs posted on the lintels of Chinese homes to invoke such benefits as happiness, longevity, or prosperity.[19]

Gu's English translation of the central Chinese is straightforward save for its rendition of *bi* as "green" rather than its standard definition as "green jade." Significantly, unlike the nonsensical "post-Tang" poetry in the *Forest of Stone Steles*, the English verse at the base of the neon demonstrates genuine poetic accomplishment. "Simple thoughts green temple" features a pleasingly simple grammatical structure—adjective, noun, adjective, noun—with a symmetrical arrangement of syllables in its four words (two, one, one, two) and approximate rhyme between the opening and closing ones ("simple," "temple"), creating an overall effect of symmetry, harmony, and enclosure. All of this is aptly associated with the idea of a temple (Chinese and Western temples often being symmetrical in design). "Simple thoughts" suggests a meditative mental state, appropriate for a temple, while "green" generates associations with spring, new life, environmentalism, and the color's supposed calming psychological effect, resonant with the idea of a temple. But Gu says he chose green for its American association with cash.[20] He may even have used the character *bi* for green because it is a Mandarin homophone of 币 *bi*, meaning "money."[21] For Gu, "green temple" means "money temple," which skews "simple thoughts" toward a simple focus on profit, which is the *raison d'être* of Sotheby's. Yet the placid and contemplative quality of Gu's verse is antithetical to the financial frenzy of the overheated mid-decade art market stoked by Sotheby's auctions, allowing

us to read an ironic divergence between the values of Sotheby's and the new Chinese and English poems Gu discovers in its name through cultural transference.

These complementary projects by Wenda Gu, *Forest of Stone Steles—Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry*, and *Cultural Transference—A Neon Calligraphy Series*, offer rich aesthetic and intellectual rewards. The first strongly references and playfully reworks classical Chinese cultural elements (poetry, steles, calligraphy) in dark and weighty engraved stone slabs and austerely beautiful black-and-white ink rubbings. The second, while also glorifying the Chinese tradition of calligraphy, draws its inspiration from contemporary advertising and commercial signage, its electrified neon tubes glowing with alluring light and color. Uniting the projects is their shared conceptual basis and use of the Complex Chinese–English Translation process to harness East–West "misunderstanding" as a force for new creation with its own cultural value and resonance—Wenda Gu's signature artistic contribution to the long and tumultuous relationship this book addresses.

Notes

1. The essential literature on Wenda Gu includes Mark H. C. Bessire, ed., *Wenda Gu: Art from Middle Kingdom to Biological Millennium* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Yan Zhou, "The Centrality of Culture in Art: The Contemporary Challenge to Chinese Artists, Particularly Wenda Gu" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 2005); and *Wenda Gu at Dartmouth: The Art of Installation* (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College in association with University Press of New England, 2008).

2. For a survey and analysis of the *united nations* series, see David Cateforis, "'The Work Is Not Finished': Wenda Gu's *united nations* Series and the Dartmouth Monuments," in *Wenda Gu at Dartmouth*, 63–85. See also Gu's "thesis" on the *united nations* project, "face the new millennium: the divine comedy of our times," in Bessire, *Wenda Gu*, 30–41.

3. Gu also sees these unreadable scripts in philosophical terms inspired by his reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein. "In general," he writes, "the miswritten language symbolizes 'misunderstanding' as the essence of our knowledge concerning the universe and the material world. Yet, the pseudo-scripts help us reach infinity and eternity by imagining the universe which is out of the reach of human knowledge (language)." Gu, "face the new millennium," 39.

4. Wenda Gu, "Forest of Stone Steles—Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry, 1993–2005," in *Translating Visuality—Wenda Gu: Forest of Stone Steles, Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry* (Shenzhen, China: OCT-Contemporary Art Terminal of He Xiangning Art Museum, 2005), 288.

5. On this series, see the various essays in *Translating Visuality*, including Gu's essay on 286–92, and my essay, "Translation as Transformation: Wenda Gu's *Forest of Stone Steles: Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry*," 311–21.

6. Before the 2005 exhibition of the completed series, smaller groupings of steles and rubbings were displayed at other venues in Australia and the United States between 2001 and 2004. After the Shenzhen showing, 12 steles and corresponding rubbings were shown at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, in early 2007. For reviews of the Shenzhen and Cornell exhibitions, respectively, see Richard Vine, "Lost in Translation," *Art in America* 94, no. 5 (May 2006): 166–70, 200; and William V. Ganis, "Ithaca, New York: Wenda Gu, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art," *Sculpture* 27, no. 5 (June 2008): 73–74.

7. For an illustration of ancient Chinese tomb slabs bearing epitaphs, see *Translating Visuality*, fig. 9, 43.

8. I specify Mandarin because while all literate Chinese read the same language (*hanyu*, meaning the languages of the Han Chinese, all of which use *hanzi* as the written script), they speak it in several different dialects, of which Mandarin, the official language of the People's Republic of China, is the dominant one. Speakers of different dialects will typically pronounce the same character differently even though its written form is the same.

9. This translation, one of several possible ones, is from Raymond Chang and Margaret Scrogin Chang, *Speaking of Chinese: A Cultural History of the Chinese Language*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 39.

10. I am grateful to Janet Chen for this translation of Gu's Chinese characters into pinyin.

11. So, too, does Gu's recent modification and gathering together of his rubbings into exquisitely crafted books, based on the tradition of the model book, commissioned by emperors from the Northern Song dynasty forward to preserve and disseminate historic inscriptions and artistically significant calligraphy; see Allen Hockley, "Past and Present in Wenda Gu's *Forest of Stone Steles: Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Dynasty Poetry*," in *Wenda Gu at Dartmouth*, 87–95.

12. For a detailed analysis of the entire series, see David Cateforis, "Calligraphy, Poetry, and Paradoxical Power in Wenda Gu's *Neon Calligraphy Series*," *Word & Image* 26, no. 1 (January-March 2010): 1–20.

13. While Gu's neon works were inspired by Chinese urban street signs, they may also be considered within the context of avant-garde neon art that emerged in the West in the 1960s, when artists such as Chryssa, Keith Sonnier, and Stephen Antonakos adopted the medium for linear geometric and minimalist abstractions, while others such as Joseph Kosuth, Bruce Nauman, and Mario Merz employed neon-lettered words and numbers in the arena of conceptual art. More recently, younger Western avant-garde artists have embraced neon as a medium for writing, among them Tracey Emin, who has replicated in neon her own handwritten pronouncements (e.g., *I Kiss You*, 2006), paralleling Gu's use of neon to translate his own calligraphy.

14. Gu quoted in Josienne N. Piller, "A Conversation with Wenda Gu," in Josienne N. Piller, ed., *Out of Time, Out of Place, Out of China: Reinventing Chinese Tradition in a New Century* (Pittsburgh: University Art Gallery, University of Pittsburgh, 2004), 9. Elsewhere, Gu says calligraphy is "just like Chinese opera. A lot of young people cannot really appreciate it and are not interested in it. My work kind of elevates scholarly calligraphy into a modern society, and it becomes a popular medium." Gu, statement in *Han Zi Reinvented: The Rhythm of Chinese Script* (Fullerton: Main Art Gallery, California State University, 2006), 21.

15. On this auction, see Carol Vogel, "Sotheby's Bets a Windfall for Today's Chinese Art," *New York Times*, 29 March 2006, and Carol Vogel, "China: The New Contemporary-Art Frontier," *New York Times*, 1 April 2006. See also Allen T. Cheng, "Art Rush Gains Steam in China: New Money Chases Contemporary Works in Booming Market," *International Herald Tribune*, 18 June 2006.

16. Because Gu has broken down the name Sotheby's into fragments that comprise actual English words ("so," "the," and "by") and because of the relationship of these words to those below them on each panel, it is possible to read the English in this neon vertically, panel by panel (essentially ignoring the Chinese characters in the middle), to yield "so simple the thoughts by greens temple." This is a result Gu did not intend, demonstrating the degree to which his verbal art, like all poetry—and any cultural text for that matter—opens itself up to creative response by the reader. I am grateful to Elizabeth Schultz for pointing out to me this possible reading of Gu's work.

17. The Chinese characters (谷氏楷典) may be translated as "Mr. Gu's canon of regular script"—a reference to Gu's distinctive style of calligraphy, which the artwork advertises (as do all of Gu's neons). Readers of Chinese will note that the third neon character in the column, 楷 *kai*, meaning "regular or model (script)," has been creatively refashioned by moving the left, "tree," radical to the top according to a process Gu developed for the *Forest of Stone Steles*, briefly explained in his essay, "Forest of Stone Steles," 291. For further analysis see Cateforis, "Calligraphy, Poetry, and Paradoxical Power."

18. I thank Rachel Voorhies for this observation.

19. For examples see Shi Bo, *Between Heaven and Earth: A History of Chinese Writing*, trans. Sherab Chödzin Kohn (Boston and London: Shambhala, 2003), 98–99.

20. Wenda Gu, personal communication with the author, Ithaca, NY, 3 March 2007. Gu intended the same reference through his use of the word in the title of his recent installation at Dartmouth College, *united nations—the green house* (2007), meant to highlight the cost of higher education in the United States and the connections between elite colleges and universities and big business. See Cateforis, "'The Work Is Not Finished,'" 79.

21. I am grateful to John James Kennedy and Hong Chun Zhang for this observation.

Curating Asia / America

Stories of the Beautiful

Narratives of East–West Interchange at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Lee Glazer

Complex networks of East–West interchange and cross-cultural encounters—what Cynthia Mills, in her introduction to this volume, describes as "dynamic international relationships"—have played a defining role in the formation and development of the Smithsonian Institution's art museums generally, but perhaps most especially at the Freer Gallery of Art where, as the marketing department once proclaimed, "America meets Asia."[1]

When the Freer, the first art museum of the Smithsonian, opened to the public in 1923, it was also one of the first American museums to exhibit Asian objects in an aesthetic rather than ethnographic context, juxtaposing them with a select group of contemporary American paintings. As the historian Steven Conn has noted, the Freer posited "a fundamental aesthetic connection" between past and present, East and West that was based on a cosmopolitan ideal of "sameness, commonality, and especially cultural cross-fertilization."[2]

Indeed, when the museum's founder, Detroit industrialist Charles Lang Freer, offered his collection of Asian antiquities and American art of the Aesthetic Movement to the nation in 1904, he explained to Smithsonian Secretary Samuel P. Langley that in spite of their diversity, his artistic holdings were part of an interconnected series constituting a harmonious aesthetic totality. Like James McNeill Whistler, the expatriate American who encouraged Freer's interest in the arts of Asia, Freer believed that the aesthetic harmonies he discerned among the objects in his collection were evidence of a transcendent, timeless, and universally valid "story of the beautiful." Riffing on Whistler's conclusion to the "Ten O'Clock" lecture that "the story of the beautiful is already

complete—hewn in the marbles of the Parthenon—and broidered, with the birds, upon the fan of Hokusai," Freer told Langley, "My great desire has been to unite modern work with masterpieces of certain periods of high civilization harmonious in spiritual suggestion, having the power to broaden aesthetic culture and the grace to elevate the human mind."[3]

Because he thought his collection was best understood and appreciated as a totality, Freer placed a number of restrictions on his bequest, including prohibiting future additions to his American holdings. Recognizing that many new discoveries were still to be made in the field of Asian art and archaeology, however, Freer added a codicil to his will allowing for the occasional acquisition of "very fine examples of Oriental, Egyptian and Near Eastern fine arts."[4] As a result of the tremendous growth of the Freer's Asian collections over the years and with the opening of the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in 1987 (to which the Freer is joined architecturally, through an underground gallery space, and administratively, through a shared staff), the Freer's focus has shifted away from its founder's emphasis on transhistorical aesthetic commonalities. Despite some significant differences between the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in terms of their respective collections and visitor experiences, the two museums are now known, in the shorthand of institutional branding, as "the Smithsonian's museums of Asian art." Collections and staff are mostly organized around geographical and cultural areas—China, Japan, Korea, India and the Himalayas, Southeast Asia, the Islamic world, the ancient Near East, America—underscoring cultural differences as well as aesthetic distinctions. Successive generations of curators have contributed to richly documented accounts of the Freer's masterpieces and the institution's history and have organized important exhibitions encompassing a wide range of Asian geography and art history. A survey of those accomplishments is beyond the scope of this essay; the interested reader can consult the museum website at www.asia.si.edu to search collections online, learn about past exhibitions and publications, and explore the finding aids for archival and bibliographic materials.

Rather than attempting a comprehensive consideration of resources at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, then, this essay will describe and comment on a small selection of materials related to the idea of cosmopolitanism on which the Freer Gallery of Art was founded. The intention is to situate Freer's collecting narrative within a more specific context of cross-cultural import-export. These more complicated narratives are not necessarily linear and certainly not teleological; they are meant to be understood as sketches, cross-cultural vignettes that might be useful and thought-provoking to teachers, students, and scholars on both sides of the Pacific.

"Mr. Whistler Does Unite the Art"

Freer's transformation from capitalist to connoisseur can be dated to 1887, the year he bought a set of Whistler etchings—his first works by the artist—from Frederick Keppel in New York City. That same year he purchased a small Japanese fan from Takayangi Tōzō, a Japanese art dealer with a shop on Fifth Avenue. In 1892 he returned to Tōzō's establishment and bought his first Asian ceramic, an Edo-period Satsuma water jar whose underglaze design, inspired by Chinese ink painting, reminded Freer of a Whistlerian landscape.[5] "Collecting comes to mean collecting precisely when a series of haphazard purchases or gifts suddenly become a meaningful sequence," Mieke Bal has noted.[6] Freer established a master narrative—one based on East–West correspondences—early in his collecting career, and Whistler was clearly destined to be the hero of the story. Following their first meeting in London in 1890, the two men developed a close relationship based on mutual esteem and benefit. Whistler not only facilitated Freer's acquisition of "a fine collection of Whistlers!!—perhaps The collection," as he promised his patron in 1899, he also encouraged Freer's burgeoning interest in comparative collecting, urging him to travel East and seek out rare specimens of Asian art to complement his own work. Writing in 1904 to fellow collector John Gellatly (whose contributions to the Smithsonian are discussed by Amelia Goerlitz in this book), Freer noted, "Throughout the entire range of Whistler's art . . . one feels the exercise of spiritual influences similar to those of the masters of Chinese and Japanese. Of course," Freer concluded, "Mr. Whistler does unite the art of the Occident with that of the Orient."[7]

Both in terms of his stylistic influences and subsequent relationship with a prominent collector of Asian art, Whistler is perhaps more closely associated with Asia—or, more accurately, with China and Japan—than any other nineteenth-century Western painter. Because of the close connection between artist and patron, the Freer's Whistler holdings are the most comprehensive of any collection in the world: 130 paintings, 946 prints, 174 drawings, and the Peacock Room, as well as a wealth of archival and bibliographic materials, including the Paul Marks book collection, which was donated to the museum library in 2003.[8] Whistler's artistic debt to Asian sources has been thoroughly documented in scholarly literature and museum exhibitions, which have established the ways in which the artist first appropriated, and then more fully synthesized, motifs and pictorial structures from a variety of Chinese and Japanese sources, including porcelain, prints, lacquer, and textiles. This aspect of Whistler's career is well represented in the Freer, most famously, perhaps, in the Peacock Room, which Whistler compared to a Japanese lacquer box. It was designed to display Kangxi blue-and-white porcelain and Whistler's own homage to East Asian decorative arts,

1. James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, showing *La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine* (1863–65), 1876–77. Oil paint and gold leaf on canvas, leather, and wood, overall: 166 × 241 1/2 × 404 in. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Charles Lang Freer.

La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine, which features the Anglo-Greek beauty Christina Spartali in Japanese robes in an eclectically oriental setting (Figure 1).[9]

After purchasing the room in 1904 and reassembling it in his Detroit home, Freer, who didn't care for the slick surfaces or bright colors of Kangxi blue-and-white porcelain, filled its shelves with more than 200 examples of his own collection of Asian ceramics whose textured, tonally subtle glazes harmonized with his collection of American tonalist painting. Some of these vessels, from China, Japan, Korea, Iran, Syria, and elsewhere, were purchased during Freer's Asian travels, while others were acquired from dealers in New York and Europe. In 1908 he commissioned a photographer to document the room, and those images demonstrate the way in which he freely mixed objects from various cultures and cultural epochs, more concerned with their chromatic relationship to one another and the decoration of the Peacock Room than with their historical origins (which, in any event, were often inaccurately understood, as subsequent reattributions attest). Freer assiduously documented all of his purchases, and his personal papers, particularly letters to and from dealers and collectors of Asian and American art, provide a fascinating record of the international art market at the turn of the last century. Later, when the Peacock Room was removed from Detroit and reinstalled in the museum in Washington, it was located at the southeast corner of the building, creating a literal link between the Whistler galleries and those rooms dedicated to the arts of

China. Registrarial records, gallery plans, photographs, and diaries document the changing array of Asian and American ceramics presided over by Whistler's Princess since 1923. Of special interest are diary entries dated to 7 and 8 December 1941:

> *Dec. 7. Honolulu attacked by the Japanese. Japan declared war on the United States.*
> *Dec. 8. All Japanese objects removed from Galleries 5, 6, 7, alcove and West corridor, and Japanese pottery from Peacock Room.*

The entry continues, noting, laconically, that six pieces of Pewabic pottery, made in Detroit, and three pieces of Chinese replaced the Japanese ceramics.[10] The overt intrusion of political realities has been extraordinarily rare in the documented history of the Freer, but these entries certainly suggest that a closer look at the intersection of policy, diplomacy, and art may yield new insights and narratives.

In addition to *La Princesse*, the Freer owns several other oriental costume pictures that occupied Whistler in the mid-1860s, among them the very first oil painting by the artist that Freer purchased, *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Green: The Balcony*. Described by Theodore Child, who saw the work in Paris in 1889, as "a Japanese fancy realized on the banks of the gray Thames," *The Balcony* borrows freely from Japanese prints, which Whistler, who never visited Asia, had begun collecting in Paris, possibly as early as 1856. Not coincidentally, Freer began to buy Japanese prints the same year that he acquired *The Balcony,* prompting him to observe "points of contact" between the two.[11] Paintings by other Americans in the collection have elicited similar cross-cultural comparisons, both by contemporaries and by subsequent generations of scholars and critics.[12] Thomas Dewing compared *Before Sunrise*, a decorative painting that he created for Freer's parlor, to the work of *ukiyo-e* artist Kitagawa Utamaro; Freer subsequently displayed Japanese prints in the same room, where they could be easily compared with Dewing's work. *The Four Sylvan Sounds*, a pair of bi-fold screens that may have been used by Freer in the Japanese manner, as a room divider, combines a Japanese format, classical figures, and synaesthetic theme.[13] Dewing himself was also quite literally a point of contact for Freer and Japanese art. During the time that he was painting *The Four Sylvan Sounds* he was also acting as his patron's buying agent for Japanese art at the New York branch of Yamanaka: in addition to purchasing a number of woodblock prints for his patron, Dewing also helped Freer acquire more than a dozen screens from the dealer.[14]

Two-Way Correspondences

In spite of the longstanding interest in studying the ways in which nineteenth-century Western artists and collectors were influenced by Japanese art, relatively little attention

2. Alvin Langdon Coburn, portrait of Charles Lang Freer with Whistler's *Venus Rising from the Sea* and a Syrian glazed pot, 1909. Albumen print. Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

has been paid to the two-way flow between Whistler and the generation of Japanese artists, critics, and collectors who looked west in the early years of the twentieth century. Japanese scholar Ayako Ono has begun to mine the correspondence contained in the Freer Papers to map the complex networks of exchange that operated among such notable figures as Freer, Whistler, Ernest Fenollosa, Siegfried Bing, Théodore Duret, and Hayashi Tadamasa.[15] She has also suggested connections between Whistler and the modern print movement in Japan, a topic that could be supported by a survey of the Sackler's Muller Collection, which contains nearly 4,000 modern prints, chiefly by Japanese artists but also by Westerners such as Bertha Lum, Helen Hyde, and Charles Bartlett, that illuminate artistic and commercial cross-pollination among American, European, and Japanese artists, designers, dealers, and collectors.[16]

Clearly, this environment of cosmopolitan interchange, mediated by changing economic, technological, and social circumstances as well as aesthetics, was complex and constituted not one but many overlapping and interconnected narratives. That kind of complexity, however, was generally edited out of the "story of the beautiful" that Freer constructed around his collections. Building records and a "Book of Suggestions" compiled by Freer and his assistant Katherine Rhoades (and now in the museum archives) provide a literal map for understanding the way in which Freer's appreciation of Whistler influenced the physical organization of the museum as a monument to cosmopolitan aestheticism. When the Freer first opened, the entire south side of the building was devoted to Whistler's works, with Chinese and Japanese art occupying adjacent galleries along the east and west corridors. Less interested in cultural and historical context than in aesthetic correspondence, Freer asserted to his friend Charles Moore, "All great works of art go together, whatever their period."[17]

A pair of photographs by Alvin Langdon Coburn, commissioned by Freer in 1909 and now part of the Freer Papers, represents this idea in concrete visual terms.

In the first, Freer crouches on the floor, comparing the iridescent glazes of a Rakka pot to the subtle tonalities of a Whistler nude (Figure 2). In the second, he gazes out at the viewer, posing beside two ancient Egyptian statuettes and a tiny Whistler pastel, a draped figure inspired by ancient Greek Tanagra figurines. These images, their multiple cultural references contained and unified by the collector's discerning eye, function as a form of autobiography and as rehearsal for the kind of looking that Freer hoped to encourage at the Freer Gallery. In the context of Freer's aestheticism, a tonalist seascape by Dwight Tryon, for instance, could be understood not only alongside similar works by contemporaries such as Whistler and Thomas Dewing, but in relationship to masterpieces of the Kanō school of fifteenth-century Japan and Song dynasty ink painting.[18]

3. Charles Lang Freer in Japan, 1907. Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

Other images in the museum archives, however, such as photographs of Freer with his international associates—fellow collectors, art dealers, servants—complicate the private narrative of aesthetic vision embodied in Coburn's work (and memorialized in the museum itself) and suggest other ways of understanding the collection that Freer developed. Take, for instance, a photograph made in 1907 during Freer's second trip to Japan (Figure 3). Standing in the first row with Freer are his Japanese counterpart Hara Tomitarō (like Freer a successful businessman and noted collector of Japanese art), and Hara's wife and daughter. The women's dress is as purely Japanese as Freer's is American. Hara, however, holds a Western hat, which was typically the first article of Western clothing adopted by Japanese men in the Meiji era. In the second row on the left is Margaret Watson, Freer's friend from Detroit whose collecting interests were shaped, in part, by Freer's counsel and assistance; next to her is the art dealer Nomura Yōzō, who had arranged for Freer to visit Hara at Sannotani, his country estate near Yokohama. (The photograph was taken in front of an ancient temple on the estate grounds).[19] Unlike Hara and

his family, Nomura, who was fluent in English and French, wears Western clothing, a form of cross-dressing that visually conveys his ability to move comfortably in Western circles.[20]

Not shown in the picture, but an important Freer connection all the same, is Nomura's wife, Michi. Educated at a Japanese school established by Canadian Methodist missionaries and a future officer of the Yokohama YWCA, Michi would travel to America the year after Freer's Japanese tour, spending several days at his Detroit mansion as part of a publicity tour around the world organized by the Asahi Newspaper Company. *A Diary of a Journey around the World*, her privately published account of the 1908 trip, included a photograph of the Peacock Room, which later inspired her husband to commission Yoshida Hiroshi, an artist trained in Western techniques, to create a "Crane Room" on the second floor of his art gallery and shop in Yokohama. Although the 1908 trip was the subject of a 2008 exhibition in Japan, Michi's journal has never been translated into English.[21]

Although he had not met Hara before traveling to his estate, Freer explained in letters home that the Yokohama collector had invited him for an extended visit "because of my love for and care of Japanese art."[22] As Christine Guth has pointed out, Hara was well aware of Freer's recent bequest to the Smithsonian, and his interest in establishing a connection to Freer was prompted not only by common aesthetic interests but by diplomatic ones as well: the display of Japanese art in a public museum in Washington might enhance cultural and political relations between the two countries.[23] The two men could, therefore, approach each other on more or less equal terms. With that in mind, it is interesting to return to the archival photograph. On the far right, in traditional worker's clothing, is one of Freer's jinrikisha drivers. This man, alone among the group in remaining unidentified, gazes off to the side, somewhat detached from the others, who, in spite of their differences, are part of an elite world community enjoying the privileges of wealth, taste, and mobility.[24]

Travels to Asia

Indeed, the theme of mobility and travel is another way of probing cosmopolitanism at the turn of the century. Among the most intriguing documents related to Freer's travel in Japan, which he visited four times, are three letters from his first visit in 1895 that were written in the traditional Japanese manner, in a scroll format with a brush dipped in ink. Based on the content of the letters, Freer seems to have adopted the format to evoke the "life of old Japan," an idealized realm that was also already an object of nostalgic desire. "The more closely I follow Japanese customs," he wrote to his business partner Frank Hecker, ". . . the greater my pleasure." The letter continues:

> *When a real Jap—(not the half Europeanized cuss.) wants to have a good time . . . he hies himself to the country, and the great temples, and picturesque little spots in the mountains and along the seashore where he always manages to have a gigantic hurrah—Ample opportunities exist and everything goes—no not every thing!! seriousness, care for the next days [*sic*] head or the bank acct. are always barred—And this was the life of old Japan and this explains their love for the butterfly in their ancient art—Butterflies they themselves would now be if free from foreign influence, foreign imitation—a simple, light-hearted, and tremendously artistic people—I wonder what they will be a century hence?*[25]

Writing to Dwight Tryon around the same time, Freer enunciated a similar idea, again utilizing the ink, brush, and scroll format. Acknowledging that "the two months I have passed in this country have sufficed to shatter some of my old time idols," he nevertheless emphasized that during his time in a "beautiful little house" at Ama-no Hashdate, "here is rest—and real Japanese life." That idyllic experience, or at least a memory of it, would ultimately join other "shadowy recollections of unknown places, glimpses of faraway coasts and strange horizons" in that "mysterious something which . . . we call the imagination."[26]

A letter from Freer's second trip to Japan in 1907, written in a conventional Western format and roughly contemporaneous with the group photograph discussed above, finds him exclaiming over encroaching modernity: "What changes! I could not believe my eyes—huge warehouses, immense chimneys, shipyards, iron foundries, a mammoth hotel half finished." Contrasting the present reality to the now "shadowy recollections" of the 1895 trip, the letter continues, "Then pure air, birds and gentle courteous Japanese. Now, smoke, the roar of machinery and . . . crowd. . . . The change sickened me."[27]

Freer's ideas about Asia generally and Japan particularly, are clearly related, as Thomas Tweed has noted, to a particular type of spiritual questing, undertaken by many privileged Americans at the turn of the century. It is also, more generally, related to strains of antimodernism in American culture that often expressed itself in a strangely eclectic mélange of cultural and historical references that were reified in the iconography of Orientalist painting as well as in the ostensibly more objective medium of photography. If imperialism and colonialism dominated Western—and especially British—images of South Asia, tourism—and a coextensive desire for escape from more pressing realities at home—was the driving force behind much early photographic imagery of East Asia, especially Japan. The museum's archives are especially strong in this area, housing over over 125,000 photographic objects, mostly by Western

4. *Women Enjoying Tea on a Balcony*, ca. 1890–1900. Hand-tinted albumen print. Mrs. Henry C. Norcross Collection of Early Photography of Japan, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Gift of Jean Leslie Norcross.

photographers, related to travel, collecting, and studying Asia. It is instructive to see them in the context of Freer's collecting practices and philosophies.

For many wealthy Americans, travel to Asia was the late-nineteenth-century equivalent of the Grand Tour, and photography studios became a thriving industry, making and marketing extraordinarily high-quality souvenir prints and albums. Albums were especially popular among visitors, both authenticating and mediating their actual experiences. Like contemporary painters influenced by Orientalism and Japonisme, photographers working in Japan for a Western market were typically interested in Asian subjects for their romantic or scientific value. Many of the photographs of Japan from the Henry and Nancy Rosin Collection and the Mrs. Harry C. Norcross Collection fall into the former category. The beautifully hand-tinted albumen prints, especially images of traditionally dressed young women, capture ideal notions of femininity that resurface in countless American paintings of the period, including many works in the Freer collection (Figure 4).[28]

Much of the material discussed here relates mostly to Americans looking east and creating narratives about Asian lands and peoples that were useful to their own spiritual, intellectual, or economic needs. Yet identity formation through East–West interchange was not always controlled by Western expectations and markets. Official

5. Xuling, *The Empress Dowager Cixi with Foreign Envoys' Wives in Leshoutang, Summer Palace, Beijing*, 1903–1905. Glass plate negative. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Purchase.

portraiture, for instance, is an area represented in the museum archives in which Asian subjects seem to have exerted a fair amount of control over their own image. In 1873 the photographer Uchida Kuichi produced a portrait of the Meiji emperor in the uniform, hairstyle, and pose of a Western military leader or aristocrat. The image embodies the Meiji equation of modernity with Western style, presenting the Emperor as part of a cosmopolitan array of colonial rulers.

Perhaps the most famous example in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of photography as a form of self-fashioning is a sequence of glass-plate negatives of the Chinese empress dowager, Cixi, by photographer Xuling. Taken around 1903, in the wake of the Boxer Rebellion, the photographs depict Cixi arrayed in all the trappings of imperial power. Borrowing and revising the conventions of Qing portraiture, these images were, as Virginia Anderson demonstrates in her essay, part of a larger campaign by the empress dowager to enhance her public image at home and abroad. As with the portrait by Hubert Vos, the photographs represent a vibrant collaboration between Cixi and the photographer, who, interestingly, was trained in Western conventions of portraiture. The photographs circulated as gifts among the Empress's own ministers and as presentations to foreign dignitaries as part of a personalized campaign in international diplomacy, which spawned yet another intriguing East–West interchange. As David

Hogge has suggested, one of Cixi's most willing accomplices in this enterprise was Sarah Pike Conger, the wife of an American envoy, whose involvement with the empress is recorded in a group photograph (Figure 5). Several years afterward, in 1905, William Howard Taft, then serving as secretary of war, embarked on a three-month diplomatic tour of Asia, visiting Japan, the Philippines, and China, where Cixi once again forged a tie to an American woman. Alice Roosevelt, the flamboyant and lovely daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt, was part of the delegation, and her presence insured that the trip received significant publicity in America. While in China, Alice was presented with a brilliantly tinted photographic portrait of Cixi, delivered to her residence in a eunuch-borne litter. A collection of photographs from the Taft mission, including the image of Cixi, were recently donated to the museum, where they augmented a 2011 exhibition exploring the photographic images of the dowager empress.[29]

Craig Calhoun has observed that in the wake of neoliberal policies of globalization and the rise of internet-based connectivity, cosmopolitanism is, once again, "in fashion." Indeed, exploring connections across vast distances of time, space, and cultural difference can, as Partha Mitter suggests, create dynamic intellectual and artistic contact zones in which traditional power relationships and hierarchies are interrogated and, perhaps, creatively subverted. Yet as Mitter and others have cautioned, cosmopolitanism is also a privileged position: it carries with it the danger of confusing particular experiences of diversity, mobility, and access with essential truths about the world as a whole.[30] The talks at the 2009 conference and the essays included here attempt to circumvent this kind of totalizing thinking and acknowledge that the investigation of East–West interchange is necessarily open-ended and ongoing, with continuously shifting parameters and competing visual narratives. Much as Charles Lang Freer may have wanted to create a narrative of cosmopolitan beauty that was "already complete," the museum that he founded remains an open book, its resources a rich mine of material for subsequent chapters of East–West interchange.

Notes

I acknowledge David Hogge and Rachael Woody, who contributed to this essay with their research, analysis, and expert organization of the materials in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives. All archival material discussed is from the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, unless otherwise noted.

1. This slogan dates to the reopening of the Freer in 1993 following a five-year renovation and expansion that connected the museum, via subterranean exhibition space, to the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, which had opened in 1987.

2. Steven Conn, "Where Is the East?: Asian Objects in American Museums, from Nathan Dunn to Charles Freer," *Winterthur Portfolio* 35:2/3 (Summer-Autumn 2000): 157–73, at 171, 170, doi:10.1086/496822; see also Andrew McClellan, "A Brief History of the Art Museum Public," in *Art and Its Publics: Museum Studies at the Millennium*, ed. Andrew McClellan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 1–49, for a broader account of the shift toward cosmopolitan aestheticism in American art museums in the early decades of the twentieth century.

3. James McNeill Whistler, "Ten O'Clock" lecture, in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, 1892, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1967), 159; Charles Lang Freer to Samuel P. Langley, December 27, 1904, Charles Lang Freer Papers.

4. *Material Papers Relating to the Freer Gift and Bequest*, "The First Codicil" (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1928), 14.

5. See Thomas Lawton, "The Asian Tours," in Lawton and Linda Merrill, *Freer: A Legacy of Art* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1993), 59–60.

6. Mieke Bal, "Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting," in *The Cultures of Collecting,* ed. John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 97–115, at 101.

7. James McNeill Whistler to Charles Lang Freer, July 29, 1899, in *With Kindest Regards: The Correspondence of Charles Lang Freer and James McNeill Whistler, 1890–1903*, ed. Linda Merrill (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 1995), 123; Freer to John Gellatly, April 5, 1904, Freer Papers, Letterpress Book 9:13.

8. The Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery library has been collecting works by and about Whistler since 1923, adding to an already substantial collection amassed by Freer himself. For a summary of the Marks Collection, see Reiko Yoshimura's blog entry, "Paul Marks Collection on Whistler," at http://smithsonianlibraries.si.edu/smithsonianlibraries/2010/08/paul-marks-collection-on-whistler.html.

9. See, for instance, John Sandberg, "'Japonisme' and Whistler," *Burlington Magazine* 106 (November 1964): 500–507; Toshio Watanabe, *High Victorian Japonisme,* Swiss Asian Studies, vol. 10 (New York and Bern: P. Lang, 1991); Linda Merrill, "Whistler and the 'Lange Lijzen,'" *Burlington Magazine* 136 (October 1996): 683–90; and Ayako Ono, *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and Nineteenth-Century Japan* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). The definitive history of the Peacock Room is Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

10. Entries for 7 and 8 December 1941, Freer Gallery of Art Diaries. Thanks to Blythe McCarthy for calling these entries to my attention.

11. Theodore Child, "American Artists at the Paris Exhibition" *Harper's Magazine* 79 (September 1889): 492; Royal Cortissoz, "Freer Museum Soon to Be Built in Washington," *New York Tribune*, 15 December 1915.

12. See Mary Ellen Haywood, "The Influence of the Classical Oriental Tradition on American Painting," *Winterthur Portfolio* 14 (Summer 1979): 107–42; Linda Merrill, "Composing the Collection," in Lawton and Merrill, 191–97; and Vivien Greene, "Aestheticism and Japan: The Cult of the Orient," in Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009): 59–71.

13. For an account of these screens, see Mitsutoshi Oba, "Eclectic Symbolism: The Interplay of Japonisme and Classicism in the Folding Screens by Thomas Wilmer Dewing, 1896–1900," Ph.D. dissertation (City University of New York, 2004), 69–90.

14. See Linda Merrill, "The American Renaissance," in Lawton and Merrill, 174, and "Art Inventories (American, European, Asian and Eastern Art), 1896–1921," and "Catalogue of Paintings on Screens and Panels by Japanese and Chinese Artists," Freer Papers.

15. A more general account of Whistler's importance to Japan is in Ayako Ono, "Whistler's Japanese Connections," in *James McNeill Whistler in Context: Essays from the Whistler Centenary Symposium, University of Glasgow, 2003*, ed. Lee Glazer et al., Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, New Series 2 (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art, 2008), 95–104.

16. See Joan B Mirviss et al., *Printed to Perfection: Twentieth-century Japanese Prints from the Robert O. Muller Collection* (Washington, DC: Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2004) for an overview of the collection and its history. On the complex visual narratives related to East Asia and modernity in Japan, see *Visualizing Cultures: Image Driven Scholarship* at http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/home/index.html.

17. Charles Moore, "Memoirs," 280, Charles Moore Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

18. See, for instance, Freer to Dwight William Tryon, 3 August 1907, Freer Papers, where he compares Tryon's painting *The Sea: Evening* to "the great Masters of the early Kano-school—Sesshu, Sesson and Masunobu . . . [and to] an ink drawing of a huge waterfall by a Sung painter called Okamatsu [*sic*]."

19. See Thomas Lawton, "Nomura Yōzō: A Bridge Across the Pacific," *Orientations* 36:3 (April 2005): 51–62.

20. My reading of this photograph is indebted to Christine Guth, "Charles Longfellow and Okakura Kakuzō: Cultural Cross-Dressing in the Colonial Context," *positions* 8:3 (Winter 2000): 605–36. doi:10.1215/10679847-8-3-605.

21. See Nomura Michi, *Sekai isshu nikki* [Diary of a Journey around the World] (Tokyo: Asahi Newspaper Co., 1908). I am grateful to Takako Sarai for translating this text and researching its author's biography.

22. Freer to Tryon, 7 July 1907, Freer Papers.

23. See Christine Guth, "A Tale of Two Collectors: Hara Tomitarō and Charles Lang Freer," *Asian Art and Culture* 4:4 (Fall 1991): 29–49.

24. My understanding of cosmopolitanism is deeply influenced by Craig Calhoun, especially "The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travelers: Toward a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101: 4 (2003): 869–97, and "Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Social Imaginary," *Daedalus* (Summer 2008): 105–14. doi:10.1162/daed.2008.137.3.105.

25. Freer to Frank J. Hecker, June 26,1895. Freer Papers.

26. Freer to Tryon, June 17, 1895, Tryon Papers.

27. Freer to Dwight William Tryon, April 15, 1907, Freer Papers.

28. On the intersection Japanese imagery and ideals of femininity, see Eunyoung Cho, "The Selling of Japan: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics in the American Art World, 1876–1915" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Delaware, 1998), and Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

29. See the Alice Roosevelt Longworth Collection of the Taft Mission. I rely here on conversations with Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery archivist David Hogge, whose considerable research on the topic was showcased in the 2011 exhibition.

30. On the resurgence of cosmopolitanism in the twenty-first century, see Calhoun, "Cosmopolitanism in the Modern Social Imaginary," especially 106–10, and Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006), especially xi–xiii.

From La Farge to Paik

Research Resources at the Smithsonian American Art Museum

Amelia A. Goerlitz

A wealth of materials related to artistic interchange between the United States and Asia await scholarly attention at the Smithsonian Institution.[1] The Smithsonian American Art Museum in particular owns a remarkable number of artworks that speak to the continuous exchange between East and West. Many of these demonstrate U.S. fascination with Asia and its cultures: prints and paintings of America's Chinatowns; late-nineteenth-century examples of Orientalism and Japonisme; Asian decorative arts and artifacts donated by an American collector; works by Anglo artists who traveled to Asia and India to depict their landscapes and peoples or to study traditional printmaking techniques; and post-war paintings that engage with Asian spirituality and calligraphic traditions. The museum also owns hundreds of works by artists of Asian descent, some well known, but many whose careers are just now being rediscovered. This essay offers a selected overview of related objects in the collection.

West Looks East

American artists have long looked eastward—not only to Europe but also to Asia and India—for subject matter and aesthetic inspiration. They did not always have to look far. In fact, the earliest of such works in the American Art Museum's collection consider with curiosity, and sometimes animosity, the presence of Asians in the United States. An example is Winslow Homer's engraving entitled *The Chinese in New York—Scene in a Baxter Street Club-House*, which was produced for *Harper's Weekly* in 1874. Here Homer examines the seamy underside of immigrant culture, depicting a group of Chinese immigrants gambling and smoking opium. His image reveals the reigning Anglo-American anxiety about the arrival

1. Edwin Lord Weeks, *Street Scene in India*, ca. 1884–88. Oil on canvas, 28 7/8 × 23 3/4 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Bequest of Harriet Lane Johnston.

of large numbers of Chinese immigrants at mid-century, an anxiety that manifested itself in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Almost concurrent to the Exclusion Act is Theodore Wores's *The Chinese Fishmonger* (see Mills, Figure 1), depicting San Francisco's Chinatown. Completed just after Wores's return to San Francisco from training in Munich, this deep-hued and richly textured painting opened the door for further picturesque depictions of the exotic ethnic quarter.[2] These two early images are complemented by works on paper by subsequent generations of artists active in San Francisco: several prints by Helen Hyde, such as *Alley in Chinatown* (1898); three etchings of Chinatown vendors by Austrian-born John Winkler (1912–73); and a market scene by Loren Barton (ca. 1924).[3]

A small number of American artists traveled to Asia in the late nineteenth century. As Virginia Anderson describes in her essay in this volume, artist Katherine Carl was invited to the imperial palace in 1903 to paint the first portrait of the controversial empress dowager of China, Cixi. Carl spent nine months in China and produced several portraits of the empress, including one exhibited at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. Following the exposition, Carl's portrait was presented by China to the U.S. government with much fanfare, and it entered the American Art Museum's collection in 1960. Carl's unusual painting, recently transferred to the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, reflects traditional Chinese portrait conventions and is surrounded by an intricately carved, camphor wood frame designed by the Empress herself.[4]

The core of the American Art Museum's collection was formed in the late nineteenth century when Orientalism was a prevalent trend. Originally named the National Gallery of Art, the museum received its inaugural gift of 34 objects from Harriet Lane Johnston in 1906, and another 150 works from William T. Evans beginning in 1907.[5] Johnston's collection includes the striking *Street Scene in India* (Figure 1),

painted by Edwin Lord Weeks in the 1880s during one of his many extended travels throughout the Near East. Among Evans's gifts to the museum are two additional works that reveal the Gilded Age fascination with the "exotic" East and an appreciation for its decorative arts: Irving R. Wiles's *Brown Kimono (Portrait of Kathryn Beta la Forque)* (1908), and H. Siddons Mowbray's *Idle Hours* (1895), both of which depict Western women clothed in kimonos and surrounded by Asian objects and decor.

The nineteenth-century taste for Asian decorative wares, textiles, and prints is perhaps most visible in the collection of John Gellatly, whose 1929 gift was an early and significant boon to the museum. Gellatly, a New York City collector, donated 1,640 works including more than 140 contemporary American paintings—most by Abbott Handerson Thayer, Childe Hassam, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Thomas Wilmer Dewing, and John Henry Twachtman—along with European paintings and nearly 1,500 other decorative art objects. This jewel box of *objets d'art* contained English and French enamels, Italian majolica, Roman glass, and close to 150 Asian art objects. The cultural origins of many of the Asian works in the Gellatly collection remain unidentified or unconfirmed, but they consist of fragments of Buddhist wall paintings as well as jewelry, ornaments, figurines, and vessels made of jade, glass, stone, and precious metals. As the museum's identity evolved over the years to focus exclusively on American art, these Asian decorative works were relegated to study collections and eventually placed on long-term loan to the Smithsonian's Freer Study Collection. Yet Gellatly's collection of Asian objects remains an under-utilized source for scholars investigating early American collecting practices.[6]

American paintings collected by Gellatly reflect his contemporaries' similar taste for Oriental objects, such as celadon ware, folding screens, and Japanese prints. Paintings such as Thomas Wilmer Dewing's *The Necklace* (ca. 1907) and *Lady in White (No. 2)* (ca. 1910); Robert Reid's *The Violet Kimono* (ca. 1910); Childe Hassam's *Tanagra (The Builders, New York)* (1918); Henry Golden Dearth's *Bronze Buddha* (n.d); and Ruth Payne Burgess's *Green Chinese Jar* (see Mills, Figure 3) all feature such decorative wares in domestic interiors.[7] Among the paintings donated by Gellatly is a watercolor entitled *Water Lily in Sunlight* (ca. 1883) by John La Farge. Even more so than his contemporaries, La Farge shared Gellatly's early interest in the art of Asia, specifically Japan. He owned Chinese and Japanese ceramics and *ukiyo-e* prints, lectured and wrote about Japan, and traveled around the country with the historian Henry Adams in 1886, recording his impressions in *An Artist's Letters from Japan* (1897). The American Art Museum owns a number of La Farge's stained glass windows, such as *Peonies in the Wind with Kakemono Borders* (ca. 1893), which evoke the bird and flower motifs of Chinese and Japanese screens.

2. Helen Hyde, *The Sauce-Pan Shop*, 1908. Color woodcut on paper, 12 ½ × 17 ⅞ in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of Hyde Gillette in memory of Mabel Hyde Gillette and Edwin Fraser Gillette.

In 1935, not long after the Gellatly donation, the museum received nearly 700 works from the Chicago Society of Etchers, including two prints by Mukul Dey that are an early indication of cultural interchange between the U.S. and India. Mukul Dey (1895–1989) was a student of Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan School. In 1916 he accompanied his teacher on a yearlong visit to the United States, where he met Bertha Jacques, founder of the Chicago Society of Etchers, and took a course in drypoint etching from James Blanding Sloan. He was elected to the Society, which exhibited and eventually donated to the museum his portrait of Tagore and a traditional image he made of the Tree of Life. On his return to India, Dey became known as the pioneer of drypoint etching, recognized for his portraits of national and world celebrities.[8]

A fascination with Japanese prints and a desire to learn Eastern techniques propelled artists such as Helen Hyde and Bertha Lum to venture to Japan and China at the turn of the century. While the museum has just three woodcuts by Lum, it holds 126 works by Hyde (mostly color etchings and woodcuts), the majority of which depict women and children in Japan, where the artist spent more than a decade. While Hyde's images (Figure 2) often reflect American stereotypes and fantasies about Japan and its people, they are a rich resource for anyone researching the early Japanese influence on American artists and the role of women in this development.[9]

In post-war decades American abstract artists engaged with Asian spiritual and design traditions in new and fruitful ways. As scholar Ding Ning discusses in his

essay in this book, Mark Tobey, a practicing Baha'i, studied brushwork in a Zen Buddhist monastery in Japan and learned Chinese calligraphy and painting from his close friend, Chinese artist Teng Baiye. The museum owns several works, such as *Canticle* (1954), that demonstrate Tobey's use of light-colored calligraphic symbols over a colored ground, a style that came to be called "white writing." Also in the museum's collection are works by Morris Graves, a friend of Tobey and practitioner of Zen. Graves's *Folded Wings—Memory—& the Moon Weeping* (ca. 1942–43) demonstrate both his appreciation of Tobey's white writing and his incorporation of nature imagery, especially the bird, as vehicle for expressing his inner state.[10]

William T. Wiley studied the work of Tobey and Graves as an art student, and became independently acquainted with Zen philosophy, parables, and poetry. Throughout his career, Wiley borrowed ideas and symbols from Zen, incorporating them into works like *Body Dharma* (1995) and *There is no Buddha Out There* (1999). The museum's in-depth collection of Wiley's work (more than 90 objects) and the catalogue of his recent retrospective, *What's It All Mean*, organized by senior curator Joann Moser, reveal one example of Zen's reverberations in late-twentieth-century American art.[11]

Asian American Artists

While the 2009 conference focused specifically on artistic interactions between East and West, it is important to also consider art made by Americans of Asian descent. The American Art Museum has rich holdings in this subfield, although these objects have not heretofore been considered as a group in its collection guides, catalogues, or survey exhibitions. Most American museums do not publish guides to their Asian Pacific American holdings and may not even classify works as such, and while numerous institutions have curators of Asian art, only the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles has a full-time curator, Karin Higa, working on art of the Asian diaspora. University departments in Asian American studies (UCLA being a prime example) are doing much to develop this neglected field of art history, but still a large percentage of artists of Asian descent remain unknown, under researched, and excluded from the American art canon and, consequently, from museum displays.[12]

A major contribution to the documentation effort has been the California Asian American Artists Biographical Survey 1850–1965 (CAAABS). Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and published as part of the important 2008 survey book, *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970*, this initiative has documented more than 1,000 artists, with an emphasis on those active on the West Coast. Also now underway is a newer initiative to document artists, archives, and art collections based on the East Coast. Co-organized by Alexandra Chang and Margo Machida and

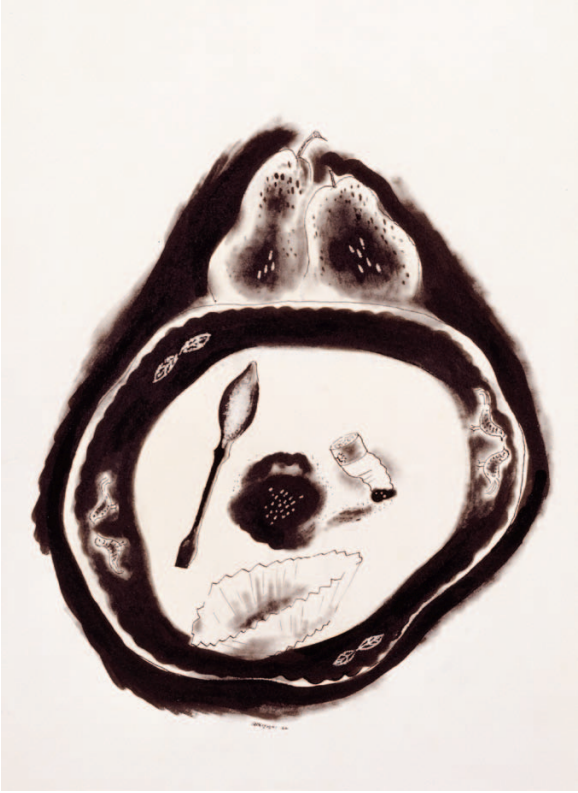
sponsored by New York University Asian/Pacific/American Institute, the East Coast Asian American Art Project (ECAAAP) will produce a volume of new scholarship documenting collections and artists in this region. While it will initially focus on New York City, research is also planned for Washington, DC, Boston, and Chicago. Another key resource is the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, which holds extensive correspondence, oral history interviews, and other documents related to Asian American artists.[13]

A review of the Asian American holdings at the American Art Museum shows a surprisingly far-reaching collection. Over the past 50 years, works have entered the collection in a variety of ways: they were transferred from other government agencies, given by foundations or collectors as part of larger collections of twentieth-century art, occasionally purchased, and in a few instances donated by artists or their estates. Despite never having set out to systematically establish a collection of Asian American art, the museum now owns more than 450 works by 100 artists of Asian descent. Some of these artists were not born in the United States and some were not U.S. citizens, but they are included in the collection because they lived in America for a number of years and contributed to the nation's artistic heritage in some meaningful way. The collection is almost exclusively modern and contemporary; only two works predate 1920. Japanese American and Chinese American artists predominate; however, the collection includes works by a number of artists of Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Indian descent. The majority of the museum's holdings of Asian American art are graphic arts, but it also has a significant collection of studio craft and sculptural objects. This distribution is not surprising considering limited acquisition budgets, but it also reflects a strong Asian tradition of craft, printmaking, and brush painting.

The museum owns 16 works by one of the most acclaimed Japanese American artists of his generation, Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1893–1953). Born in Okayama, Japan, Kuniyoshi immigrated to the United States as a young man in 1906, eventually becoming a prominent figure in the New York avant-garde. The museum's works span nearly the length of his career and include paintings, lithographs, and drawings of his best-known subjects: landscapes with cows done in a folk art style, sensuous female figures, and carnival performers. A recent acquisition, the ink-and-brush drawing *Remains of Lunch* (Figure 3) shows not only the artist's skill as a draftsman but also his subtle humor. Complementing the collection is a portrait of Kuniyoshi in his studio painted in 1930 by his lifelong friend, Japanese-born Woodstock painter Bumpei Usui.

Chiura Obata (1885–1975) also came to the United States from Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, moving to San Francisco in 1903. In 1927

Obata first visited Yosemite National Park and the Sierra Nevada, where he sketched dramatic landscapes in pencil, ink, and watercolor. These studies served as the basis for a limited-edition portfolio of 35 color woodblock prints that Obata created in Tokyo over a period of two years. In 2000 the American Art Museum acquired 26 of the full set from the artist's family, and in 2005 the family gave three of the watercolor studies and a set of 125 progressive proofs that illustrate the artist's labor-intensive working methods. While Obata has been largely unknown to U.S. audiences, the museum's 2008 exhibition, *Obata's Yosemite*, and a segment in Ken Burns's 2009 documentary on the national parks may help to increase awareness of his work.[14]



3. Yasuo Kuniyoshi, *Remains of Lunch*, 1922. Pen and ink, brush and ink on paper, 13 7/8 × 10 1/2 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Museum purchase through the Luisita L. and Franz H. Denghausen Endowment.

A number of artists of Asian ancestry who were active in the 1930s and 1940s are represented among the American Art Museum's extensive holdings of New Deal art. Chinese American watercolorist Dong Kingman (1911–2000) received popular and critical attention in his day, exhibiting in group shows at major San Francisco museums and working for the Works Progress Administration. The museum owns five of his California landscapes including *Bridge Over River* painted in 1936 under the auspices of the WPA, while the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden owns a dynamic streetscape, *Station Platform* (1946), painted after the artist's move to New York City. Other works by Asian American artists completed under New Deal art programs were transferred to the American Art Museum from various federal agencies starting in the 1960s. These include a wood engraving by Hawaiian-born Japanese American artist Isami Doi entitled *Near Coney Island* (ca. 1937), two watercolors by Fugi Nakamizo, Sakari Suzuki's New York landscape *Merrick Road* (1934), Hideo Date's *White Gardenias* (n.d.),

nine lithographs by Chuzo Tamotzu, and Kenjiro Nomura's oddly desolate *The Farm* (1934), painted before the Seattle artist's internment.[15]

An interesting if minor collection of works by several noted mid-century Asian American artists came to the museum as part of a 1984 gift from the Container Corporation of America. Under the direction of design consultant Herbert Bayer, a major Bauhaus figure, the corporation undertook some of the first fine-art advertising campaigns, commissioning artists to create original works in various media that were then reproduced as full-page ads in mainstream magazines. An early series entitled *United Nations* was undertaken during World War II as a tribute to allied nations. Chinese American artists Yun Gee and Mai-mai Sze were chosen to represent China and Indo-China, while Filipino artist Venancio Igarta created *Freedom!* (1945) in reference to the four-year Japanese occupation of his homeland.[16] The corporation also donated 161 original works of art created for the *Great Ideas of Western Man* series, launched in 1950, and its smaller and largely forgotten counterpart, *Great Ideas of Eastern Man*. For the Great Ideas campaigns, artists were asked to create a work in response to a preselected quote by a great thinker; Eastern reflections were culled from Buddha, Gandhi, Issa, Confucius, Rabindranath Tagore, Lao Tzu, and the Bhagavad-Gita. The museum's holdings include ten works from the Eastern Man Series, eight of them by artists of Asian and Indian descent: Chi-kwan Chen, Wing Gig Fong, Shiro Ikegawa, Genichiro Inokuma, Yusaku Kamekura, Matazo Kayama, Shiko Munakata, and Mohan B. Samant.[17]

Jeffrey Wechsler's 1997 landmark exhibition *Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions* and its accompanying catalogue drew attention to many mid-century Asian American abstractionists whose work was informed by Asian philosophy or technique.[18] Of the 58 artists featured in the catalogue, 15 are represented in the American Art Museum's collection: Leo Amino, Chen Chi, Fay Chong, Isami Doi, Genichiro Inokuma, Matsumi Kanemitsu, Seong Moy, Win Ng, Isamu Noguchi, Kenzo Okada, Arthur Okamura, Toshiko Takaezu, Walasse Ting, Ansei Uchima, and Wang Ming. Frequently on view is Noguchi's monumental marble sculpture *Grey Sun* (1967), but the museum also owns three works by the lesser-known Japanese American sculptor Leo Amino (1911–1989). These sculptures demonstrate Amino's range of media and styles: from a Henry Moore-inspired wooden carving entitled *Seedling* (1953) to *Family* (1948), an example of his pioneering work in polyester resin. Okada (1902–1982), a Japanese-born painter who moved to New York in 1950, is singled out by Wechsler as most closely aligned with the New York Abstract Expressionist school.[19] Two of his oil paintings—*To Point* (1962) and *Grey* (1970)—are owned by the museum; the former was part of an important gift of post-war artworks from S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc. This donation also included Okamura's expressionist landscape *Stray Cur, Eucalyptus Grove* (1961), Ng's ceramic sculpture *Two Sides of Three Blocks #3* (1967), Gwen-Lin Goo's *Semblance* (n.d.), and the abstract

landscape *The Shores of Light* (1960) by Hawaiian-born Chinese American painter Reuben Tam.[20] Researchers interested in Tam should also consult the Archives of American Art for his papers: nine boxes of material from 1938 to 1997 including correspondence, sketchbooks, photographs, and color slides.

4. Seong Moy, *Kuang Kung*, 1952. Color woodcut on paper, 14 1/8 × 12 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Gift of the artist.

The American Art Museum owns a number of works by postwar Asian American artists celebrated for their printmaking. The most thoroughly represented is Seong Moy, who was born in China in 1921 and came to Minnesota as a child. Moy studied art in Minnesota and later in New York at Hans Hofmann's school and the Art Students League. A painter and printmaker, he began in the 1940s to create woodcuts that overtly refer to his cultural heritage, such as *Kuang Kung* (Figure 4), a woodcut abstraction of the Chinese god of war. The museum has an extensive collection of 36 drawings, woodcuts, and etchings by Moy; all but three were donated by the artist in 1969.[21]

Matsumi (Mike) Kanemitsu (1922–1992)—discussed in this volume by Bert Winther-Tamaki—was born in the United States but spent his childhood in Japan. He worked in New York in a variety of media including watercolor and *sumi* (Japanese ink drawing) before arriving in Los Angeles in the 1960s to learn lithography at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop. The museum owns 13 of his lithographs, which reproduce the wet look of his *sumi* paintings. *Santa Anita Yesterday & Today*, one of the 1970 series *Illustrations of Southern California,* alludes to the wartime use of the Los Angeles track to temporarily house Japanese Americans before they were relocated to internment camps.[22]

Contemporary with such abstract prints but more traditional in style are the works of Japanese-born master woodcutter Un-ichi Hiratsuka (1895–1997). Hiratsuka was

one of Japan's most accomplished printmakers before moving to Washington, DC, in 1962. He lived in the capital with his daughter for more than 30 years—working and teaching—before returning to Japan near the end of his life. The museum mounted a small exhibition of his work in 1999 and owns three woodcuts, including two local scenes, *Washington Monument* (n.d.) and *Key Bridge in Winter* (1966).[23]

The museum's Renwick Gallery of American craft has actively acquired and exhibited objects made by Asian Americans since its opening in 1972. The 2005 exhibit *High Fiber* featured Japanese American fiber artists Kiyomi Iwata and Kay Sekimachi; *Staged Stories: Renwick Craft Invitational 2009* highlighted Korean-born sculptor Sun Koo Yuh; and the 2011 Renwick Invitational includes works by ceramicist Cliff Lee, who was born in Taiwan. The gallery's 2010–2011 exhibition *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps, 1942–1946*, organized by guest curator Delphine Hirasuna, showcased the creativity and resilience of Japanese American internees (few of them trained craftsmen) who fashioned exquisite domestic objects for their surroundings out of scraps and found materials.

The Renwick's collection of objects by Asian American artists includes, among others: fiber works by Kiyomi Iwata and Kay Sekimachi; wood vessels by Binh Pho; metalwork by Chunghi Choo and Miye Matsukata; ceramic pieces by Jun Kaneko, Mineo Mizuno, Chun Wen Wang, Patti Warashina, and Shige Yamada; and furniture by celebrated woodworker George Nakashima.[24] Represented in depth is the ceramic art of Toshiko Takaezu (1922–2011), who worked in clay for more than six decades. Born in Hawaii to Japanese parents, Takaezu studied at the University of Hawaii with Claude Horan and later at Cranbrook Academy with Maija Grotell. In 1955 she left for eight months in Japan, where she visited traditional pottery studios and Zen Buddhist temples in an effort to reconnect with her cultural heritage. The Renwick owns 19 of Takaezu's works, from the 1950s through 2002, including many of her signature closed vertical vessels with their painterly brush decoration.

The American Art Museum's contemporary painting collection includes significant works by Asian American artists that deal with issues of memory and cultural identity.[25] Roger Shimomura's (b. 1939) painting *Diary: December 12, 1941* (1980) refers to his family's history of internment during World War II. Combining elements of traditional Japanese art with a hard-edged pop style, *Diary* is from a series of paintings based on his grandmother's diary entries. On this date in 1941, his grandmother wrote of "America's large-heartedness" in allowing "we who are enemy to them" to withdraw $100 from the bank following the bombing of Pearl Harbor (the accounts of *issei* were frozen immediately after the attack). Shimomura ironically considers America's reputation as a defender of liberty and justice by depict-

ing the shadow of Superman looming across a shoji screen behind his grandmother.[26]

Masami Teraoka creates politically charged art in a style that imitates *ukiyo-e*, or floating world, nineteenth-century block prints. Born in Japan in 1936, Teraoka came to California in his twenties to attend art school, arriving in the midst of the 1960s counterculture movement. Eventually, he decided to address contemporary issues in his painting by means of a style that could reflect his own hybrid identity. Paintings such as *Tale of 1000 Condoms/Geisha and Skeleton* (1989) and *Oiran and Mirror, from the AIDS Series* (1988) reflect the artist's concern with the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, while *MacDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan/Tokyo Ginza Shuffle* (1982) is a tongue-in-cheek critique of American consumerism and globalization.

5. Hung Liu, *The Ocean is the Dragon's World*, 1995. Oil on canvas, painted wood panel, metal support rod, and metal bird cage with wood and ceramic appendages, 97 × 82 1/2 × 17 5/8 in. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC, Museum purchase in part through the Lichtenberg Family Foundation.

Hung Liu (b. 1948) came of age in China during the Cultural Revolution and witnessed the government's attempt to sever the country's ties to its past through the widespread destruction of historical artifacts and cultural sites. Her paintings are often inspired by once-forgotten archival photographs. Painted nearly a century later than Katherine Carl's life portrait of the empress dowager, *The Ocean is the Dragon's World* (Figure 5) echoes the composition of a formal royal portrait. Whereas Carl was restricted by the desires of her sitter and conventions of Chinese portraiture, Liu's painting is based on a photograph now in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, and reveals her contrasting creative freedom. Here, Cixi's face is left nearly featureless, so the artist can focus instead on her opulent costume and surroundings. She holds a birdcage—a real object that emerges from the surface of the canvas—which might hint at the cloistered life of Chinese royalty.[27] Liu's paintings were featured in the museum's 1996–97 exhibition *American Kaleidoscope: Themes and Perspectives in Recent Art* and related catalogue, and senior curator Joann Moser interviewed her in 2010 for the Archives of American Art's oral history repository.

Recent acquisitions by the museum's contemporary curators have enriched our collection of installation and new media artworks by Asian Americans. In 2009 Joanna Marsh organized *Jean Shin: Common Threads*, a solo show featuring eight of the Korean-born artist's colossal installation pieces that reflect upon aspects of contemporary American culture. Among the works on view was the recent acquisition *Chemical Balance III* (2009), an assemblage of prescription pill bottles in the shape of stalactites and stalagmites that addresses Americans' addiction to prescription medication. With the assistance of John Hanhardt, senior curator for media arts, the museum recently acquired a work by Japanese-German artist Kota Ezawa (b. 1969), who became famous for his 2002 animated sequence of the reading of the O.J. Simpson verdict. Ezawa's four-minute digitally animated film *LYAM 3D* takes as its source various scenes from the 1961 French film *Last Year at Marienbad* in which the actors stand motionless.[28]

Ezawa's predecessor, the international video artist Nam June Paik (1932–2006), who was born in South Korea, had a long relationship with the American Art Museum. Among the Paik works in our collection are the early *Zen for TV* (1963, 1976 version) and two later video walls: *Electronic Superhighway: Continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii* (1995) and *Megatron/Matrix* (1995), on view in the museum's contemporary galleries. In 2009 the museum also acquired the artist's complete estate archive, which consists of research material, documentation, correspondence, sculptural robots, and video and television technology. The Nam June Paik Archive provides unprecedented insight into the artist's creative process, his sources of inspiration, and the artistic communities on three continents with whom he worked for more than five decades. While the collection is not yet catalogued and available to researchers, it should prove an extraordinary resource in the future for those studying Paik and the history of the moving image.

Scholars interested in Asian American art should further consult the resources available at the American Art Museum's Research and Scholars Center (www.americanart.si.edu/research/). The center maintains the searchable online databases of the Inventories of American Painting and Sculpture, including records documenting artworks by nearly 150 Asian American artists in public and private collections worldwide. The inventories are supplemented by the center's photographic collection, which holds images of artworks by more than 40 Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander artists.

Notes

I thank Elizabeth Anderson, Robin Dettre, and Shannon Perry at the American Art Museum and Aimee Soubier at the Hirshhorn for their assistance in accessing information about each museum's collections. My gratitude also goes to Margo Machida and Joann Moser, who provided valuable insight into the museums' Asian American holdings.

1. Works of art can be found in the collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery; historical collections reside at the National Museum of American History; vertical files are available through the Smithsonian Libraries; and oral history interviews and artists' papers are largely centralized in the Archives of American Art, although other archives, image collections, and research databases are maintained by the American Art Museum's Research and Scholars Center.

2. Anthony W. Lee's *Picturing Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) discusses this painting alongside other picturesque depictions of Chinatown, see especially 85–88.

3. The museum also owns 25 photographic diptychs by Eve Sonneman of New York's Chinatown (1970–72).

4. For a description of her work on this particular portrait, see Katherine A. Carl, *With the Empress Dowager* (New York: The Century Co., 1905), 237–38, 287–88, and 294–99.

5. For my discussion of the Johnston, Evans, and Gellatly donations, I rely on Lois M. Fink, *A History of the Smithsonian American Art Museum* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 54–67.

6. Little is known about Gellatly and his collection. Xiomara Murray's dissertation in progress at New York University on the origins of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's collections includes a chapter on the Gellatly donation, focusing on the American and European paintings. Melody Deusner's dissertation, "A Network of Associations: Aesthetic Painting and its Patrons, 1870–1914" (University of Delaware, 2010) discusses Gellatly in relation to other patrons of aesthetic art such as Charles Lang Freer. The museum also owns a number of nineteenth-century Chinese export fans (mostly from a 1939 bequest by Alfred Duane Pell), which were shown in the Renwick Gallery's 1985 exhibition *Fanfare*.

7. Other fine examples from this era not in the Gellatly collection include Robert Reid's *The Mirror* (ca. 1910), which depicts a woman standing in front of a blue and gold folding screen, and William M. Paxton's *The Figurine* (1921), which shows a housekeeper dusting the vitrine of an Asian figurine.

8. See the Mukul Dey archives and the artist's reminiscences at www.chitralekha.org/profile.htm. His work was included in the Society's 1917 and 1918 exhibitions; Chicago Society of Etchers, *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Etchings under the Management of the Chicago Society of Etchers* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1917; 1918).

9. For more on Hyde and Lum, see Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 58–73.

10. The museum owns 16 works by Tobey and seven by Graves. On the Northwest School, see Kathleen Pyne and D. Scott Atkinson, "Landscapes of the Mind: New Conceptions of Nature" in Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2009), 94–96.

11. Joann Moser, John Yau, and John G. Hanhardt, *What's It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect* (Berkeley: University of California Press and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2009).

12. One obvious exception is the Noguchi Museum in Long Island City, New York. Significant holdings of Asian American art can also be found at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, the Honolulu Academy of Art, and the Contemporary Art Museum in Honolulu. While at one time many U.S. art museums owned works by Asian Americans, "intervening years have seen the deaccessioning of important works, as the result of changing interests of curators and collectors"; Sharon Spain, "Introduction to Biographies of California Asian American Artists, 1850–1965" in Gordon H. Chang, Mark Dean Johnson, and Paul J. Karlstrom, eds., *Asian American Art: A History, 1850–1970* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 287.

13. See www.aaa.si.edu/guides/site-asianamerican/. Noted artists represented in the Archives' collection include Dong Kingman, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Miye Matsukata, Seong Moy, Isamu Noguchi, Norie Sato, Toshiko Takaezu, Reuben Tam, and Patti Warashina.

14. "Chiura Obata, a Painter of Yosemite" (04:53) aired as part of Ken Burns's six-episode series "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," in 2009, and can be viewed at www.pbs.org/nationalparks/. See also *Obata's Yosemite: The Art and Letters of Chiura Obata from His Trip to the High Sierra in 1927* (Yosemite National Park, California: Yosemite Association, 1993).

15. The museum's New Deal holdings include about 3,000 works, making it one of the largest such collections in the world. See foreword by Elizabeth Broun in Ann Prentice Wagner, *1934: A New Deal for Artists* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2009), 6–9. Isami Doi is also represented by a complete set of wood engravings from the portfolio *The Wayward Muse*, given to the museum in 1971.

16. While the only works by Yun Gee in the American Art Museum's collection are two versions of *Indo-China* from the United Nations Series, the Hirshhorn owns five of his paintings from 1926–27.

17. An additional work by an Asian American artist in the Container Corporation collection is Keichi Kimura's *Hawaii* (1946–49) from the United States Series. On the corporation's advertising campaigns, see Herbert Bayer's introduction to *Great Ideas*, ed. John Massey (Chicago: Container Corporation of America, 1976), xi.

18. Jeffrey Wechsler, ed., *Asian Traditions, Modern Expressions: Asian American Artists and Abstraction, 1945–1970* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., in association with the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1997).

19. Okada showed at Betty Parsons Gallery for many years and was included in the Walker Art Center's exhibition *60 American Painters: Abstract Expressionist Painting of the Fifties* in 1960. See Wechsler, *Asian Traditions, Modern Expressions*, 170.

20. The Hirshhorn owns an additional five works by Okamura from 1960–61 and four by Tam from the mid-1950s.

21. The Archives of American Art offers further resources in the form of the Seong Moy Papers, 1946–1970, and a 1971 oral history interview of the artist.

22. The Archives of American Art holds Kanemitsu's papers.

23. The exhibit *Woodcuts by Hiratsuka: A Master in Our Midst* ran from 14 May to 12 September 1999.

24. The American Art Museum also owns three works on paper and a recently acquired oil painting, *Sanctuary at Western Sunset* (1992), by Tom Nakashima, George Nakashima's nephew.

25. Several renowned contemporary artists of Asian descent who are not represented in the American Art Museum's collection are included in the Hirshhorn's collection, including Nikki S. Lee, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Yoko Ono, and Yayoi Kusama.

26. Jacquelyn Days Serwer, *American Kaleidoscope: Themes and Perspectives in Recent Art* (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1996), 92–98, quote at 101 n. 6.

27. See Jonathan P. Binstock, "Hung Liu" in Serwer, *American Kaleidoscope*, 120–31; and an interview of Hung Liu by Han Qing, translated by Luisetta Mudie, "The Many Faces of Hung Liu," *Radio Free Asia*, at www.rfa.org/english/news/arts/china_artist-20051018.html [accessed 9 August 2010].

28. Ezawa's slide projection *History of Photography Remix* (2004–2006) is in the Hirshhorn's collection.

Reflections on *The Third Mind*

Alexandra Munroe

The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989 was a large-scale exhibition accompanied by a scholarly book of the same name, a series of live performances, a website, audio guide, and public programs organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and presented there in winter 2009. Many years in the making, it explored a set of ideas around the vast, unruly, and often problematic concept of "Asian influence" on visual art of the United States. Europe has long been recognized as the font of mainstream American art movements, but the show explored an alternative lineage aligned with America's Pacific aspect. Asia's "influence" on such influential artists and writers as James McNeill Whistler, John La Farge, Arthur Wesley Dow, Ezra Pound, Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, John Cage, Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, Ad Reinhardt, Agnes Martin, and Adrian Piper has been well-documented and treated in previous studies. *The Third Mind* (Figures 1–3) made the case that this influence was not occasional or eccentric, but was rather a continuous and complex undercurrent that courses through the development of early modern to post-war to neo-avant-garde art. That the nature of artists' work with these forces varied widely and that "Asia" meant different things to different artists at different periods should not discourage our critical and historical analyses of this profound lineage of ideas, events, and people, it concluded.

We fully expected *The Third Mind* to raise debate, even controversy, and we welcome signs that, although the exhibition has closed, this ambitious project and the substantial exhibition catalogue are continuing to stir important questions across disciplines and area studies. By its nature (a finite

1. Entrance to *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2009, with view of James Lee Byars's *The Death of James Lee Byars*, 1982/1994, made of gold leaf, crystal, and Plexiglas. Photo by David Heald, courtesy The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

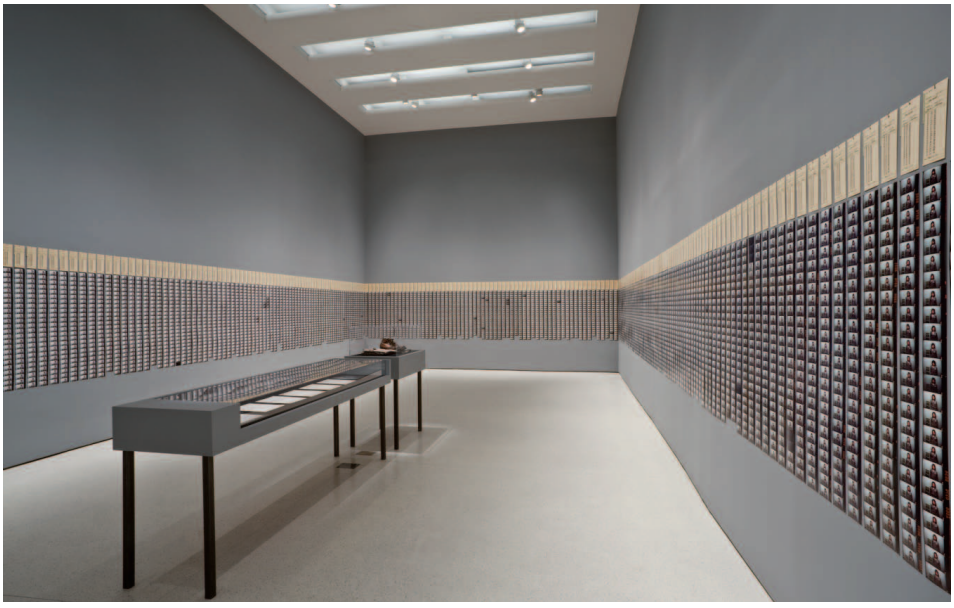
physical space, among other things) an exhibition, like a textbook, requires a curator to make difficult decisions about what to highlight and what to leave out. Thus many of the questions we wrestled with and even some of the criticisms later directed at the show can illuminate key areas ripe for further scholarly inquiry.

Literature

Working together, colleagues inside and outside the Guggenheim helped me to shape the story of American artists' exposure to Asian images and themes as a cultural, intellectual, and political history of how select ideas were mediated, interpreted, and used.[1] Without question, *The Third Mind* built its narrative around the role that literature played in this mediation, and the art-historical narrative throughout elucidated the key texts and writers artists learned the most from. Throughout our period of study, translations, commentaries, and adaptations of Asian philosophy, metaphysics, poetry, and aesthetics composed by such towering figures as Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, Arthur Wesley Dow, Ernest Fenollosa, Carl Jung, Thomas Merton, Ezra Pound, Nancy Wilson Ross, Gary Snyder, D. T. Suzuki, Thoreau, and Arthur Waley were widely used by visual artists. Artists' encounters with these key figures, either through friendship, a master-disciple relationship, or their writings, were a centerpiece of the exhibition's narrative. The patterns of this intellectual history are suggested in Ikuyo Nakagawa's chronology and bibliography compiled for the book accompanying the show, and *The Third Mind* used such

texts as the primary point of encounter with Asia. Asian readings also provided artists with a logic of political resistance to counter what was perceived as the West's moral and spiritual decline. Thomas Merton, writing on the Bhagavad Gita more than a 100 years after Thoreau, claimed: "It brings to the West a salutary reminder that our highly activistic and one-sided culture is faced with a crisis that may end in self-destruction because it lacks an authentic metaphysical consciousness. Without such depth, our moral and political protestations are just so much verbiage."[2]

2. Paul Kos, *Sound of Ice Melting*, 1970. Two 25-pound blocks of ice, eight boom microphone stands, eight microphones, mixer, amplifier, two large speakers, and cables, dimensions variable. Installation view, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2009. Collection of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Photo by David Heald, courtesy The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.



3. Tehching Hsieh, *Punching the Time Clock on the Hour, One Year Performance, April 11, 1980–April 11, 1981*. Installation of documentary photographs and original performance relics, including poster, documents, 366 time cards, 366 24-hour images, 16 mm film, time clock, 16 mm movie camera, uniform, shoes, and footprints, dimensions variable. Collection of the artist. Photo by David Heald, courtesy The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

Consequently, this project was not about Asia per se. Rather, it sought foremost to illuminate the range of approaches that artists and writers used to collect ideas for their creative strategies, and to interrogate and critique their own conditioned worldviews. This last point offers a threshold for deeper examination: to elaborate on how artists used the East as critique of the West, and in a subversive alliance with the objects of American imperialism in the Pacific and, more widely, across Asia.

Orientalist Tropes

Throughout our planning, execution, and presentation of *The Third Mind*, our challenge was to remain critical of the process of constructing the East as a reductive suit of aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural concepts. Skeptics were quick to assume that we would be guilty of perpetuating Orientalist tropes. In fact, we inverted them. As I stated in the catalogue's introduction, while the significance of Edward Said's (1978) theory is far-reaching, its pejorative cast over the entire enterprise of Western studies, commentaries, and creative interpretations of Oriental subjects has become problematic.[3] Said's focus on the Middle East (a reflection of his Palestinian origin) is only partially relevant to South Asia and, in one important regard, fundamentally inapplicable to East Asia and Southeast Asia, where colonial and imperial dominion was most brutally exercised by Japan, not the West. Further, as J. J. Clarke argued, Said's critique of Western representations of the East, wherein Western knowledge of the Orient "has generally proceeded . . . from cultural antipathy," does not encompass romantic or positive attitudes toward the Orient and what they produced. Clarke proposed an "affirmative orientalism, seeking to show that the West endeavored to integrate Eastern thought into its own intellectual concerns in a manner which, on the face of it, cannot be fully understood in terms of 'power' and 'domination.'"[4] For our appreciation of the rich applications of Asian art and thought in modern American art, Clarke's argument resonated.

Furthermore, those recent works that apply Said's critique to India or China overwhelmingly emphasize nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century literature, philosophy, and religious studies. The subject of Orientalism and modern Western art, and in particular modern American art, has been largely ignored. Finally, his thesis does not engage the influence of Orientalism upon the self-awareness of the very Asians it purports to describe. Okakura Kakuzō (also known as Tenshin), author of *The Ideals of the East* (1903) and *The Book of Tea* (1906), and his contemporary Swami Vivekananda, the leading disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and founder of Vedanta societies in Europe and America, are cases in point. As Richard King and Harry Harootunian describe in their essays in *The Third Mind*, these influential thinkers promoted the particular spirituality of Japanese and Indian culture, respectively, in terms that

were formulated by Western Orientalists as a curative for the nihilism and materialism of encroaching modernization and westernization. This history is what Bernard Faure calls "secondary Orientalism."[5]

Of course, arguments in this vein of intellectual history could not be "displayed" in the show itself; they were developed in the publication which grew to be more of a book than a conventional exhibition catalogue. My hope is that the book will become a lasting source of discussion among those whose lives are dedicated to the history of ideas, and that Orientalism, affirmative Orientalism, and secondary Orientalism inspire keen revisionist studies both in the academy and museums.

Goals and Limits

No one faulted *The Third Mind* for its lack of ambition. Featuring some 270 works by more than 100 artists, it explored how American art evolved through a process of appropriation and integration of Asian sources that developed from the 1860s through the 1980s, when globalization came to eclipse earlier, more deliberate modes of cultural transmission and reception.

The title we chose, *The Third Mind,* refers to a "cut-ups" work by the Beat writers William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, whose cult of spontaneity in art and life drew inspiration from Asian attitudes, or perceived attitudes. This manuscript, which was on display, is composed of random texts and images that evoke the eclectic yet purposeful method by which American artists often appropriated material from Asia to create new forms, structures, and meanings in their work. Misreadings, mediations, denials, and imaginary projections emerge as important iterations of this creative process. Some artists identified with non-Western art and thought precisely to subvert and critique what they saw as the spiritually bankrupt capitalist West. Others culled alternative, East–West identities from Transcendentalism, Theosophy, Jung's aspirations of the collective unconscious, and New Age movements preaching the perennial vitality of Asia's spiritual psychology in a global age. Still others simply extracted and freely enlisted what served their particular artistic impulses. Grounded in documentary evidence of the artists' encounters with Asia (through travel, literature, artifacts, friendships, and/or spiritual practice), the exhibition showed how artists working in America adapted Eastern ideas and art forms to create not only new styles of art, but more importantly, a new theoretical definition of the contemplative experience and self-transformative role of art itself.

Critics were unanimous that the show was "long overdue"; they were less convinced by its "sprawling" and "unwieldy" scale. (The public was undaunted; an unprecedented number of visitors returned two or three times.) Although it spanned

120 years and was installed across 35,000 square feet, *The Third Mind* was not comprehensive, exhaustive, or definitive. Exhibitions are defined by the spaces they occupy, and decisions for what to include are subject to a variety of variable conditions. Hundreds more artists could have been included and weren't, because we knew that encyclopedias don't make good shows. Early on, we thus decided that architecture, design, ceramics, fashion, and popular art were beyond this project's scope.

Opening with the late-nineteenth-century Aesthetic movement, *The Third Mind* illuminated the Asian influences shaping such major movements as abstract art, conceptual art, minimalism, and the neo-avant-garde as they unfolded in New York and on the West Coast. It also presented select developments in modern poetry, music, and dance-theater. Organized chronologically and thematically, each of the show's seven sections explored interconnected collectives of artists who shared specific aesthetic strategies and rhetoric derived from Asian sources, which shaped their conceptual approach to art-making.[6]

Pacific Sound

Critics noted the importance of West Coast artists and avant-garde centers in *The Third Mind*. This was no coincidence, as the Pacific coast was a focus of my research from the start. One such center was Berkeley in the late 1950s, where La Monte Young emerged as an originator of Minimal music with compositions based on a series of long sustained tones set in a unique harmonic language. As early as 1958, Young analyzed the slow-tempo structures of classical Japanese *gagaku* orchestration and drone harmonics found in Hindustani (North Indian) *raga* vocal styles and tamboura tuning and applied them to his investigations of the tuning system called just intonation. Classical Indian musical concepts of *svara* (the entire dimension of pitch and its potential effect on the listener) and *tala* (the organization of cyclic structures that facilitate improvisation) reinforced Young's concern for pure intonation, an expanded unfolding of time, and organically evolving improvisational techniques.

In 1962, Young formed a group later called The Theatre of Eternal Music whose first members included Terry Riley and Marian Zazeela. They later became disciples of and collaborated with the master Hindustani raga vocalist Pandit Pran Nath from 1970 until his death in 1996. Pran Nath taught, "You are the sound: the sound is in you." The concept of a work that was eternal led Young and Zazeela to evolve *Dream House*, a continuous electronic sound environment in luminous fields of colored light (Figure 4). Working closely with the artists and their sound and light engineers, the Guggenheim constructed a *Dream House* environment that occupied an entire annex gallery space of some 4,000 square feet. Zazeela's work uses intense light focused

4. La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, *Dream House*, 1962–present. Installation view, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2009. Photo by David Heald, courtesy The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

through dichroic filters projected onto sculptural forms to create optical effects that alternatively dissolve and substantiate the contours and shadows. These effects are harmonically integrated with Young's musical environment of periodic sound waveforms to create an all-encompassing immersion in the material of sound. The *Dream House* is a full-sensory light and sound environment that can transform the listener's psychic state into what Young calls "the drone-state-of-mind." Visitors were asked to take off their shoes and invited to enter the space; some stayed for hours. Three live performances of Young and Zazeela's Just Alap Raga Ensemble were staged there during the course of the show (featuring Jung Hee Choi, Da'ud Constant, voices; Charles Curtis, cello; Jon Catler, electric sustainer guitar; and Naren Budhkar, tabla).

Some critics pointed to a lack of Indian influence in the show, perhaps unaware of the equivalent importance we placed on the arts of sound and poetry—as central to our thesis as the "visual art" of painting. From Thoreau onward, India's hold over the American imagination came through its metaphysical poetry (the Vedic texts) and sacred music (*raga*); the catalogue also examines the influence of Vivekenanda and Coomeraswamy in some depth. Yet, the imagination of India in American art and culture—and the reasons for its perceived marginalization—definitely calls for greater research.

Critics and the public alike noted the predominance of East Asian influences in the history of American art. This should come as no surprise for anyone with a basic knowledge of U.S. history. My catalogue introduction frames America's

5. Installation view of *The Third Mind*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2009. Photo by David Heald, courtesy The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

encounter with Asia squarely within its geopolitical history as a Pacific power.[7] Japanese art and Zen Buddhism dominate in part because America's political and economic ties with Japan were historically stronger than those with China or India, the other prime source nations. Also, Protestant ethics resonated with Japanese disembodied "minimalist" aesthetics for the same reasons they clashed with fleshy manifestations of India's Hindu pantheon. Asian immigration, especially on the West Coast, also characterizes America's experience. For much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the primary waves of immigrants came from southern China and Japan to labor in the mining, railroad, and agricultural developments of the Western frontier. These migrations changed the fabric of American society and nurtured artists' encounters with Asia. South Asian immigration is more recent phenomenon, and would have played a greater role if our scope had extended into the 1990s and early 2000s.

Travel and Globalization

This brings us to the question of periodization. We chose to make the year 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, the end date for our historical survey. All the exhibition artists were born before 1960. For the generations covered in this exhibition and catalogue, foreign travel was a self-transformative experience. Their process of research was intentionally and deeply internalized. Travel was part escape, part enlightenment, and grounded in an Orientalist tradition that sought self-betterment through the

selective appropriation of ideas, practices, relationships, and material artifacts that represented an alternative and superior Other. After 1990, artists traveled less for personal research and far more as participants in the biennales and other international shows that have proliferated around the globe over the last two decades. This development has paralleled globalization and the consequent shift in the nature of how knowledge is transmitted. Another factor in this shift, which supports why the exhibition (Figure 5) ends when it does, is the rise of post-colonial theory and the Orientalist discourse. The introduction of critique, which defined the process of Orientalism, served to historicize the phenomenon, and thereby to effect its end. That said, there is an enormous amount of important work to be done in sorting out manifestations of Asian art and culture, including identity politics among Asian Americans, in the context of globalization. These issues were squarely beyond the scope of this show but offer rich directions for future research and analyses.

Response and Challenges

Some raised concern about how the exhibition contributed (or not) to the general public's understanding of "American art" and "Asia." Were we "essentializing" the subject, or was Asia too absent? In fact, the Guggenheim hired an expert museum evaluation team, Randi Korn & Associates, to review visitor experiences. (The show's total attendance was 208,995, or 3,029 per day, over 11 weeks.) This report, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, revealed that the majority of visitors were persuaded by how "the exhibition demonstrated Asian influences on American artists" and "understood that this is a *new* idea or *new* paradigm in art history."[8] According to Randi Korn, these findings are extraordinary: most visitors to most shows don't come away as changed by what they saw. The report states:

> *These visitors explained that the theme of the exhibition is Asian influences on American art, and most were able to elaborate, talking about Eastern philosophy and religion, minimalism, loss of ego, contemplation, beauty, etc. These visitors were very enthusiastic about the exhibition, and many of them were surprised by a new discovery or new way of looking at American art; for example, quite a few said they had never thought about the influence of calligraphy on abstract expressionism or were amazed at the connections among all the artists and Asia. Many of them believed they would look at American art through a slightly different lens as a result of seeing the exhibition. A few even said they developed a new appreciation for contemporary art as a result of thinking about Asian influences and ideas. All except one said they would now think about American art with a heightened awareness of artists' intentions.*[9]

Much remains to be done, but I am pleased with what the Guggenheim show accomplished. The project aimed high: to trace how the art, literature, and philosophy of Asia were transmitted, received, and transformed within American cultural and intellectual currents, influencing the articulation of new visual and conceptual languages. In addressing these challenges, I believe that it revealed some critical fault lines for further investigation. I hope that the information and the arguments raised in the exhibition will live on, not only through the book, website, and memories of curatorial and visitor experiences, but in a vigorous inter-disciplinary dialogue, across the fields of art history, literature, music, and area studies, about American art's Asian lineage and its meanings.

Notes

1. The realization of all these components of *The Third Mind* would not have been possible without the support and collaboration of many colleagues. I especially acknowledge the contributions of Vivien Greene, curator of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art at the Guggenheim, who curated the opening section, *Aestheticism and Japan*; research associate Ikuyo Nakagawa; and members of our academic advisory committee.

2. Thomas Merton, "The Significance of the Bhagavad-gita" (1968), in Merton, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1973), 349.

3. Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1991), 3. Said's work expands upon earlier works that critique the Western construction and imaginary of Asian culture and its people such as Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Discovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (1950; New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) and John M. Steadman, *The Myth of Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1970).

4. Said (1978) is quoted in J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997), 8. Clarke also explained his position there: "Where Said, drawing upon Michel Foucault's work concerning the relationship between knowledge and power, saw Orientalism as a 'master narrative' of Western Imperialism which constructs and controls its subjugated other, I shall portray it as tending to confront the structures of Western knowledge and power and to engage with Eastern ideas in ways which are more creative, more open-textured, and more reciprocal than are allowed for in Said's critique."

5. See Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 5–9.

6. The accompanying book follows this chronological structure with chapters that correspond to the show's section titles. These are: *Aestheticism and Japan: The Cult of the Orient; Landscapes of the Mind: New Conceptions of Nature; Ezra Pound, Modern Poetry, and Dance Theater; The Asian Dimensions of Postwar Abstract Art: Calligraphy and Metaphysics; Buddhism and the Neo-Avant-Garde: Cage Zen, Beat Zen, and Zen; Art of Perceptual Experience: Pure Abstraction and Ecstatic Minimalism;* and *Performance Art and the Experiential Present*. See Alexandra Munroe, *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2009), appendices by Ikuyo Nakagawa.

7. The United States colonized the Philippine islands in 1898, had important interests in the outcome of Sino-Japanese War of 1895 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, and sided with Chiang Kai-shek in the Guomindang's resistance to the Japanese invasion of China and occupation of Manchukuo in the 1930s. Asia's Pacific War escalated with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. This strike against the U.S. Pacific fleet pulled the United States into World War II. Four years later, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Japan's surrender secured American hegemony once again in the region. While the Cold War is often cast as a conflict between Soviet spheres of influence and Western Europe and North America, the majority of military action took place on the Asian front. The U.S. occupation of Japan (1945–52) and

post-war security pacts with Japan, its central role in the Korean War (1950–53) and subsequent long-term military presence in South Korea, and its disastrous engagement in the Vietnam War (ca. 1961–75) all attest to the enormity of Asia in the history and psyche of the American people.

8. Summative Evaluation: *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*. Prepared for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum by Randi Korn & Associates, Alexandria, VA (April 2009). Unpublished report.

9. Ibid.

Teaching American Art in East Asia

Eunyoung Cho

Teaching American art in East Asia presents an array of challenges for a non-U.S. based art historian, including a daunting lack of resources and the need to invent new approaches that inspire the interests of students. I was trained for a dozen years in the United States as a historian of American art and have been teaching Korean, Chinese, and Japanese students in East Asia ever since. For more than nine years, I have been teaching American and modern art at Wonkwang University in South Korea, which has a total of 25,000 students (Figure 1). During the academic year of 2008–09, I had an opportunity to teach American art history as a visiting professor in the Graduate School of American Studies at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan. Before my teaching in Japan, I was also appointed as honorary visiting professor at Yanbian University in Yanji, China, in 2006 and 2007, where I gave lectures on American interactions with East Asian art and culture. My students in Korea are mostly Koreans, with some Chinese students and college professors enrolled in the master's and doctoral program. In China, students were almost evenly split between Chinese and Korean. In Japan, about two-thirds of the graduate students enrolled in my classes were Japanese with the rest being mostly Chinese, thus making me known as "the Korean professor teaching American art to Japanese and Chinese students in English."

Globalization has made American popular culture widely available to many of my students, but has had little impact on their access to basic information about the history of American art. Challenges in teaching have included responding to their varying understandings or degrees of knowledge about American visual culture, meeting student interests that are mostly different from those of their American counterparts, exploring themes and

1. Professor Eunyoung Cho teaching an undergraduate class on American art in September 2009 at Wonkwang University, Iksan, South Korea.

critical issues that resonate with the students' goals, and developing alternative methodologies to meet their specific needs, as well as fitting this subject into the curriculum of each undergraduate and graduate school and dealing with the lack of interest on the part of other art historians.

The most immediate challenge concerns textbooks, or the lack of them. Several decades have passed since Western art history courses were first included in college curricula in Korea and Japan, and more recently in China. In most courses, "Western" means "European," and almost all of the Western art texts being used in classrooms represent European art, with American art usually appearing on the scene in the twentieth century, particularly post-World War II.

The majority of students do not feel comfortable reading English texts. While a good number of books on modern and contemporary American art now exist in translation, there are very few texts available covering American art of the premodern era in Korea and China, and only a few more in Japan. One survey book of American art translated in Korean, for instance, was first published in 1958 at the behest of the United States Information Service, an overseas branch of the United States Information Agency (USIA). James T. Flexner's *The Pocket History of American Painting* was published by the Korean Ministry of Education and distributed to many academic institutions. My search for library holdings shows that the Japanese and Chinese translations of Flexner's book were also published in Tokyo in 1955 and in

Taiwan in 1959.[1] The U.S. government launched a series of projects to promote the distribution of knowledge about American art and culture in East Asia. In Korea, between the Korean War and 1966, the U.S. Information Service commissioned the translation of 412 books on American politics, society, and culture, but American art was not its priority.[2] Since then, no Korean-language survey books of American art covering the pre-modern era have appeared, whereas a couple of Japanese editions have been published. In Japan, after Flexner's book, a translation of Abraham Davidson's *The Story of American Painting* (1974) became available in 1976 along with several books on American art and antiques written by Japanese authors.[3]

Even if they could be translated, the challenge concerning existing texts of American art is that they were written mainly from Western/American-centered perspectives, paying little attention to the readers in the "other" world who may have differing viewpoints and little knowledge of American history and culture. Thus, teaching American art to non-English-speaking Asian students using instructors' direct translations of American texts does not necessarily meet the interests of students. I prefer a combination of lecture notes, selected readings, and visual images over any particular American art textbook. This methodology has some merit; however, many students, both undergraduate and graduate, do express difficulty in approaching American art without texts and internet resources in their own languages. American art survey textbooks suitable for non-Western students with little or very basic knowledge of U.S. history and culture need to be developed.

In addition to the difficulties encountered in teaching American art without suitable textbooks, instructors confront the lack of visual and textual resources. Thanks to the digitization of archival materials and availability of online databases, the situation is improving. However, access to electronic journals and resources is limited at many academic institutions in East Asia, and their library holdings for American art are dismal in comparison with those in the United States. I personally purchase almost all of the books on American art necessary for my research and teaching and lend them to students who are willing to read English. I may be the only academic in Korea who subscribes to the journal *American Art*, and the only university to do likewise has a library supported by the U.S. Embassy in Korea. As for visual resources, the majority of students in Northeast Asia have not had an opportunity to "pay their respects" in person to an Eakins or a Copley, Bierstadt, Homer, or Ryder. Traveling exhibition programs supported by American museums, including the Smithsonian art museums, with their well-advertised policy—"if you do not visit us, we will visit you"—seem to be aimed mainly at the domestic audience.

We did have and still do have traveling shows of American art in East Asia. Just recently, in 2007, the exhibition *Art in America: 300 Years of Innovation*, launched by

the Guggenheim Museum and the Terra Foundation for American Art, introduced a large number of Chinese people to the history and themes of American art. Art exhibitions have proven to be excellent means not only for cross-cultural communications and mutual understanding among nations, but also for furthering political, diplomatic, and economic gains in an international society. In the past in East Asia, the USIA played a significant role in encouraging artistic and scholarly exchanges to bridge gaps between cultures as part of American foreign policy. During the post-war and Cold War years between 1952–65, the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, with collaboration from USIA, organized or supported more than 150 traveling exhibitions with venues covering five continents. More than half of these tours were organized for Europe as well as Central and South America, and 21 exhibitions were aimed at East Asia.[4] A good portion of them were sent to Japan, which was undergoing a rapid transformation from being America's enemy to an indispensable ally after the war.

One of the first exhibitions organized for an East Asian tour was *Eight American Artists* (1957), which included four of the so-called Northwest Coast artists, known for their keen interest in and appropriation of Asian art and ideas. About 30 works by Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, and Guy Anderson were represented in this show, which toured first in South Korea and Japan and then in the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand.[5] It is interesting that the USIA did not select America's great landscapes or Westward Ho! expansion images illustrating manifest destiny, or the new "heroic and masculine" "American type" paintings of Abstract Expressionists, suitable for representing America's power in the new world order as well as endorsing the "exceptional" characteristics of American art. Instead, it chose these Pacific Coast/Seattle-area artists, who were, more or less, shunned by the mainstream New York art world owing to their multicultural tastes and "unmasculine," "mystical," "meditative," and Japanesque or Asianesque characteristics. Commenting on the purpose of this exhibition, *Time* magazine predicted that the artists would be welcomed in the "Far East" because of their Orientalism, mysticism, and calligraphic style—listing, ironically, the very elements for which they were undervalued in the United States.[6]

The United States was not the only country that employed art exhibitions to foster communications between cultures and support its foreign policy goals after World War II. Japan also attempted to replace its jingoistic image with an aesthetic one through its art exhibitions in the United States, often in tandem with American endeavors to create and circulate in various areas a new, agreeable image of Japan, which was becoming a valuable partner in the Cold War.[7] After the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, the Japanese government, in collaboration with the United

States, organized *The Exhibition of Japanese Paintings and Sculpture* in 1953, with venues in Washington, DC, New York, Seattle, Chicago, and Boston. In the following year, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, a traditional Japanese house and garden show entitled *House in the Garden*, as well as a Japanese calligraphy exhibition, were great successes, instrumental in the "Japan boom" in the United States that developed by the mid-1950s, remarkably soon after the war. In a similar context, after the Korean War, the Korean government, with U.S. support, sent the exhibition *Masterpieces of Korean Art* to eight American cities from New York to Honolulu in 1957–58 in an effort to convey the impression of a culture possessing strong artistic traditions stretching back thousands of years. Major Chinese exhibitions in the United States included a traditional Chinese painting show at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1954 and a series of exhibitions launched after President Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to China and Deng Xiaoping's 1979 trip to America.[8] Interestingly, in contrast to the Japanese, Chinese, and Korean exhibitions, which stressed their long-standing tradition and history, U.S. art exhibitions in East Asia, with few exceptions, invariably dealt with post-1940 art demonstrating American freedom and diversity, thus unintentionally causing Asian students to conceptualize the art of the United States as having a shorter history than it actually has.

The intrinsic merit of American visual culture established on American soil is often questioned once it crosses native borders. Most students show great interest in American art beginning in the 1940s, but considerably less in art prior to early American modernism and even less in anything before the Hudson River School. Before my study in a master's program in the United States in the late 1980s, I had received another master's degree in the field of modern art in Seoul, where I studied under Korean professors who were Sorbonne graduates specializing in French art. Such painters as John Singleton Copley, Thomas Cole, or Winslow Homer were never mentioned in classes. Art history students had spent U.S. dollar bills with George Washington's portrait but were unfamiliar with Gilbert Stuart. The situation has seen little change in Korea over the past 20 years. A couple of instructors might include Thomas Eakins and Mary Cassatt in their teaching of modern art, and a few more professors might discuss Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Edward Hopper. In my experience, having discussions on pre-1940 American art occurs more often while conversing with those in the field of American studies than in histories of Western art.

The Association of Historians of Western Art in Korea, of which I am a member, is composed of three divisions: art theory and criticism; art up to the eighteenth century; and modern and contemporary art (for which I have been serving as the chair from 2007 to 2011). We hold nationwide conferences and international

symposiums three times a year, but proposals for pre-1940 American art are rare. This situation is largely due to the fact that Korean scholars trained in France, Germany, and Italy constitute the majority in the field who are studying art history up to the 1930s, while those trained in the United States focus mainly on contemporary art. The lack of American art texts published in Korean, of course, is another contributing factor. But the door is open, and scholars and students have been encouraged to present and publish papers on American art in the context of art history, visual culture, and transcultural studies. Moving beyond academia, I try to accommodate invitations for public lectures on American art and to cover pre-World War II American art. For most of those in an audience, it is their first time ever hearing details about the subject.

As for the students, they tend to approach American art more as a means to understanding the United States and its people and culture than for its aesthetic aspects. They find subject matter raising issues of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, cultural encounters, and identity to be most appealing. During my school years in South Korea in the 1980s, seminar discussions about American art concentrated on several selected issues and began with Ben Shahn and Social Realism, in which we found parallels to Korea's political turmoil and social predicaments at that time. Such an approach and correspondences still hold appeal. Asian students' responses to American art may differ to a varying degree depending on their own interests and goals as well as mirror their respective countries' shifting relations with the United States. The needs of students of each Asian country determine how U.S. art is perceived and defined. I have been tailoring my teaching to the specific demands of Korean, Japanese, and Chinese students by skimming through art of the antebellum period to elaborate on late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century art and by engaging them with artists, themes, and issues reflecting the multiracial and multicultural facets of America.

For my undergraduate courses at Wonkwang University, I incorporate American art history from the colonial period to the present into the six-semester histories of Western art courses. I also teach completely different classes for the M.A. program, the Ph.D. program, and the teachers college graduate program. I have been offering courses to discuss subject matter and issues that resonate with their interests. In Japan, at Doshisha University, I adopted a similar, yet broader approach and methodology as the graduate student body was a mix of students of differing nationalities who were majoring in American studies (Figure 2).[9] Few had ever taken an art history course, but these students had a solid background in American and cultural studies consisting of classes, international conferences, and lecture programs.

In order to elaborate on the kind of themes generally covered in art history

2. American art class at Doshisha University during a field trip in May 2008 to Ho-o-do Temple in Uji, near Kyoto, on which the Japanese building, Ho-o-den, at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago was modeled.

classes, I will outline here the contents of two of my syllabi for Doshisha University. Written in English, these syllabi were developed in 2007 for the 2008 academic year because the university printed them in advance for students. As the students had practically no background in American art, I offered several kinds of courses.

The first was a twentieth-century American art course. I divided it into one part covering the 1880s to 1930s, and another from the 1940s to the present. This class was essentially an introduction to the history of American modern art with references to its European counterparts. I took a general chronological and thematic approach, focusing on historical, social, and cultural developments in a global context through a discussion of key artists, major movements, and critical issues such as the making of a national identity and style; the construction of "American type" paintings and canon; the tensions of class, gender, and race in American art scenes; and the issues of globalization, localization, and glocalization.

The two other courses I offered in Japan received a more enthusiastic response from the student body. "American Interactions with Japanese Art and Culture," a version of which I still offer in Korea, covers American interchanges with East Asian art and ideas in a broader context. This class deals with American interest in Asian art as well as America's conflicting attitudes toward Asia as manifested in U.S. popular culture and various fields of the arts between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Developed from the topics of my papers published in Korean over the last

10 years, the course traces the various aspects of the reception and appropriation of Asian art and culture in American production, including American Japonisme, early American modernism, the Pacific Coast artists, Abstract Expressionism, and Fluxus. It discusses these subjects in the light of race and gender issues, cultural politics, critical perception, and reception of Japanese/Chinese art as well as Japan's nationalistic philosophical and religious ideas, anti-Asian sentiments, and American nationalist tendencies during and after the war. The tentative schedule printed in the 2007 syllabi booklet of Doshisha University shows:[10]

Week 1. Introduction
Week 2. The American Encounter with Japan
Week 3. Japanese Participation in Creating Japonisme
Week 4. Imaging Cultural and Racial Others: American Perceptions of Japan and East Asia
Week 5. Myth-makers
Week 6. American Japonisme in Visual Arts and Popular Culture
Week 7. Images of Japanese Women in High Art and Low Art
Week 8. Japanizing the American Feminine Ideal
Week 9. Interpreting the Use of Japanese Fashion by American Women as Portrayed in American Paintings
Week 10. Early American Modernist Perceptions and Use of Japanese Art and Ideas
Week 11, Institutional Zen Buddhism in American Art and Culture
Week 12. Marginalizing Mark Tobey and the so-called "Northwest School"
Week 13 Anti-Japanese/Asian Sentiments in American Modernism
Week 14. After the 1950s

The other course I offered in Japan is "Asian American Art," an introduction to the diverse themes, aspects, and issues of Asian American visual art, artists, and artistic production, in particular, of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean Americans. Various forms of visual arts made by and about Asian Americans are discussed within the context of transnational Asian American histories, cultures, and identities. Some of the topics include: Orientalist prejudices and stereotypes of Asians in Hollywood and the mass media; the re/creation of history and memory; the politics of Asian American production and reception; the impact of Asian American art on the canon of American modernism; and the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality.[11] The tentative schedule of lectures for this course, as printed in the 2007 Doshisha University pamphlet, follows:

Week 1. Introduction
Week 2. Picturing Chinatown
Week 3. Picturing Asian Women: Geishas and Dragon Ladies
Week 4. Madame Butterfly versus M. Butterfly
Week 5. Asians at the World's Fairs of the Turn of the 20th Century
Week 6. Representing the "Yellow Peril"
Week 7. Stereotypes of Asian American Men: American Media Images
Week 8. Performing the Asian Stereotypes in American Popular Culture
Week 9. Documenting Japanese American Internment Camps
Week 10. Visual Art: Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Isamu Noguchi
Week 11. Visual Art: Minorities in American Mainstream Art Scenes
Week 12. Issues of Gender, Sexuality, and Ethnicity: Yoko Ono and Hung Liu
Week 13. Issues of Gender, Sexuality, and Ethnicity II: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Yong Soon Min, Tomie Arai, Hanh Thi Pham
Week 14. Contemporary Asian American Artists

In my experience, teaching American art on the other side of the globe requires reframing American art in order to underline its universality and its applicability to all cultures. At the same time, we must also balance that with its Americanness and try to avoid either an American or Asian-centered point of view.

This effort to maintain equilibrium between universality and Americanness, however, is at times questioned: as we locate American art in a global context, should we also reexamine it in the context of "glocalization"? By glocalization, I mean a co-presence of "globalization" and "localization," a historical process whereby each locality or indigenous culture bridges the global and local, and thus develops a cultural relationship to the global system against the global onslaught of global capitalism, ideology, media, and network identities. For a Korean professor teaching American art histories to Korean, Japanese, and Chinese students in East Asia in either the mother tongue or English, is it effective to adopt wholesale the methodologies and curricula of an Americanist in the United States? Should an Asian historian of American art teaching in Asia "Asianize" American art or, more specifically, "Koreanize," "Japanize," or "Chinize" the subject, tailoring it to the sensibilities of the students located in their respective cultures and societies? For instance, discussions on Asian-American art within the context of transnational Asian-American histories, cultures, and identities, as done in universities in the United States, may not work in individual Asian countries that do not support a pan-Asian concept. For many Asian students, Asian Americans do not exist; instead, there are only Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, and so forth.

Teaching American art in East Asia invites some significant revisions in the canon of American art history and reallocations of "major" and "minor" artists currently engraved in and out of the mainstream. Most Asian students show little interest in the American construction of the histories of American art, but demonstrate much more interest in a reinterpretation of American art that caters to modern Asian experiences and issues. These questions have caused me to reflect on and understand the reasons why American organizations, including Christian missions, have changed their strategies over the recent years concerning Asia and have been increasing their efforts to cultivate native emissaries in tandem with sending American counterparts trained in each society's language and culture. Is it not due time for us to develop alternative methodologies for approaching American art in this era of globalization and glocalization?

Notes

1. Flexner's text was published by Pocket Books, New York, in English in 1950 and printed simultaneously by Houghton Mifflin Company under the title *A Short History of American Painting*. A book covering modern American art, John I. H. Baur's *Revolution and Tradition in Modern American Art* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1951) was translated and published in Japan in 1954 and in Korea in 1958 at the commission of the U.S. Information Service.

2. See Young-Na Kim, *Korean Art of the Twentieth Century* (in Korean) (Seoul: Yekyong, 2001), 217–19.

3. Flexner's *A Short History of American Painting* was translated by Kiyomi Morimoto and printed by Arechi Syuppansha in Tokyo in 1955 (175 pages). Davidson's book was co-translated by Sumio Kuwabara and Michiyo Kuwabara and published by PARCO Syuppankyoku in 1976 (166 pages). Japanese university library holdings show four American art survey books written by Japanese authors: Ryohei Nakamura, *Amerika no Bijyutsu* [American Art] (Tokyo: Toa Syuppansha, 1947), 206 pages with 12 illustrations; Koji Ichida, *Amerika no Bijyutsu, Kotto* [American Art and Antiques] (Tokyo: Yuhosha, 1975), 243 pages with 17 illustrations; and *Amerika Bijyutsu Hatten shi* [The History of Development of American Art] (Tokyo: Ichimai no e, 1982), 253 pages with 19 illustrations. Sumio Kuwabara, one year after his translation of Davidson's book, published his own book, *Amerika Kaiga no Keifu* [Genealogy of American Paintings] (Tokyo: Bijyutsu Syuppansha, 1977), 176 pages with 24 illustrations.

4. The Museum of Modern Art, *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1995), 143. Seven of the 21 shows were organized during the period between 1952 and 1960, and the other 14 shows between 1961 and 1965.

5. Ten sculptures by Rhys Caparn, David Hare, Seymour Lipton, and Ezio Martinelli were also included.

6. "Contemporaries Abroad," *Time* 70 (22 July 1957): 56.

7. See Naoko Shibusawa, *American's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

8. Chinese shows in the United States included, for instance, the touring exhibition of Taiwan's National Museum collection in 1962; *Beyond the Great Wall of China* (1973); *New Visions of Classical China* (1974); and an exhibition of Chin dynasty art and artifacts (1979).

9. The students were all master's students. There is no general coursework requirement for doctoral students at Doshisha University as it has adopted a European system.

10. I later revised some of the content for the actual classes I taught at Doshiha, but followed the main frame of the syllabi I had prepared. *Graduate School of American Studies 2008 Bulletin*, Doshisha University, 32–33.

11. Ibid., 36–37.

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Index

Numbers in *italic* indicate pages with illustrations.

abstract art in China, 184–86, *184*, *185*
Abstract Expressionist painters, 122–24, 180–81
Adams, Ansel, *200*
Africa, 29–30
African Americans. *See* blacks/African Americans
Ai Xuan, 200–201, *201*, 203n24
  Cold Rain, 201, *201*
  Fence, 201
  Maybe the Sky still So Blue, 201
  The Morning Mist over Marshes, 201
  Seasonal Wind in Zoige, 201
  Shepherd, 201
Alexander, Ramy, 161
all-over composition, *194*, 195–96
Altar of Heaven (Temple of Heaven), 196
American Kaleidoscope exhibition, 243
American Philosophical Society, 72–73, 79n13, 129
"The American Way" (Wright), 161
Amino, Leo, 240
  Family, 240
  Seedling, 240
Anderson, Benedict, 25
Anderson, Guy, 264
Appiah, Kwame Anthony, 25, 230n30
Archer, William
  The Green Goddess, 32
architecture
  California architectural styles, 41, 45–46, *45*
  Indo-US relationships and, 33–35, *34*
  intertwining of Asian and American visual productions and, 21, *22*
  Philippine Islands reconstruction, 39–46, *42*, *45*, *46*, *47*, 50n4–5,10
Arellano, Juan, 40, 49
Aristotelian universalism, 25
Arp, Jean (Hans), 55, 56, 194
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (Smithsonian Institution)
  collections and resources, 229n8, 245n1
  connection to Freer Gallery, 218, 228n1
  A Long and Tumultuous Relationship: East–West Interchanges in American Art conference, role in, 4
  opening of, 218, 228n1
  organization of collections, 218
Art in America exhibition, 263–65
The Art of Gaman exhibition, 242
Asian American, coining of term, 16n2
Asian American art
  Asian interest in, 269–70
  Asian-ness of artwork, 11
  Asian referentiality, categories of, 114–15, 124
  "Asian tradition" component of, 113–14, 124
  collections and resources for study of, 237–44, 245n12
  pan-Asian concept of, 269
  post-war enthusiasm for Japanese culture and, 122–24
Asian American artists
  Abstract Expressionist painters, 122–24
  familial and generational demand and artwork by, 11
  projects to recover achievements of, 16n2, 237–238
  transnational experience of, 192
  World War II and treatment of, 115–22, 124, 242
The Asian American Century (Cohen), 3, 15, 16n5
Asian American population
  attitudes of blacks toward, 151
  globalization and Asian American identity politics, 257
  influence of, 6
  in US, 3, 6, 16n5
Asian art
  cultural tendencies and expectations and selective interests in, 12–14
  decorative and graphic arts, 6–7, 8, *8*, 235
  discovery and use of by the West, 22–23, 171–73, 193–97, 219–21, 233–37, 249–50

export market, art made for, 74, 104, 171–173
influences of on Western art, 130, 192–97, 233–37
interest in by US audiences, 7, 14, 129–30
methods and techniques, 133–37, 148
narratives and patterns of, 8–9
Western artistic traditions and evaluation of qualities of, 23
Asian artists
interchanges between, 10
Western art techniques, training in, 130, 131
Wyeth, impact of work by on, 11, 192, 197–202
Asian cultures
Americanization of, 3
diversity of, 24
interest in, historic and contemporary, 6–7
references to Asia by non-Asian artists, 114–15, 193–96, 197, 233–37
selective acculturation process, 29
Asian nations
cultural tendencies and expectations and travel to, 12–13
ethnographic project by Vos and travel to, 99–100, 107n6
globalization, technology, and the closeness of, 5–6
immigrants from, 256
language barriers in, 13
travel to, study of, 12–13,17n9, 161, 225–28, *226*, *227*, 234–37, 256–57
US, relationships with, 3, 7, 38–49, 81–82
US history and, 258–59n7
Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions (Wechsler), 240
Aso, Taro, 6

Baishe (White Society) and white in paintings, 133, 141n13
Bakhtin, Mikhail, 26
Bankoku ezu, 83–84, *84*, 92n8
Barrows, David Prescott, 49
Barton, Loren, 234
Bayer, Herbert, 240
Bender, Albert, 151, 157n28
Bentley, William, 69–70, 71–74
Bhagavad Gita, 29–30, 31, 33, 240, 251
blacks/African Americans
attitudes of toward Asian neighbors, 151
civilized, semi-civilized, and uncivilized people, 86, 91–92, 91
derogatory images of and Japanese self-conceptualization, 11, 81, 92
images and representation of, 89–92, *89*, *91*
Japanese attitudes toward, 90
Japanese exposure to images of, 81, 83, 92n5
multicultural practices of black artists, 11, 143–50, 154
Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna, 31
Book of Documents, 57
books and printed materials
print culture, circulation of knowledge, and cosmopolitanism, 25–27
textbooks for teaching art, 262–63, 266
translation of Asian texts, 26
Bowditch, Nathaniel, 71
Brancusi, Constantin, 194
Braque, Georges, 194
Bright, Jonathan, 77
Buck, Pearl, 133
Buddhism
articles of faith, questioning of, 30
DABU/TABU, 55–57, 64n12
Dada as American aspect of, 55
Daoism, blending of with, 54
Head of a Boy sculpture and iconography of (Johnson), 150–51
increase in Buddhists in US, 16n5
interest in by US, 30–31
Pearl sculpture and Buddhist deities and royalties (Johnson), 143, *144*, 145–46, 150, 151
spiritual perspectives of, 63n5
Zen Buddhism, development of, 55
Zen Buddhism, economic and political ties to Japan and exposure to, 256
Zen Buddhism, interest in and influence of, 53, 237, 242
Bufano, Beniamino, 150–54, 157n33–34
Peace, 152–53, 157n31,34
Sun Yat Sen, 151–54, *152*, 157n33–34
Burgess, Ruth Payne, 235
Green Chinese Jar, *8*, 235
Burnham, David, 39, 43–45, 50n10, 51n12
Burroughs, William S., 253
BUTA, 64n12
Bynner, Walter, 208, 209

Cage, John, 53, 249
Calder, Alexander, 194
Calhoun, Craig, 25, 36n14, 228, 230n24
California
architectural styles from, 41, 45–46, *45*
Bay Area as gateway to Pacific Rim, 144–45, 154
increasing focus on in American art studies, 8
Chinese artists in, 127
gazebo and park landscapes from, 42–43
transnational modernist movement, 143–44
Zhang's paintings of landscapes of, 134, *135*, 141n14
"California artists," 144
California Asian American Artists Biographical Survey 1850–1965 (CAAABS), 237
Callahan, Kenneth, 264
calligraphy
Forest of Stone Steles (Gu), 207–8, *208*, 209–10, 212, 213n11
Kanemitsu's interest in and use of, 123–25
Neon Calligraphy series (Gu), 205, 210–12, *210*, 213n13–14,16–17, 20
Okubo's study of, 118
post-war interest in, 122
steles, examples of on, 207
white ink for, 132
"Cambodia" upholstery line, 173

Caparn, Rhys, 270n5
Carl, Katherine, 102, 105, 107–108n15–16, 234, 243
Carnes, Jonathan, 71, 78n8
Carter, Clara, 48
Carus, Paul, 29
Cassatt, Mary, 265
Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh, 194
Central Academy of Graphic Art in Beijing, 180
Chang, Alexandra, 237
Chang, Gordon H., 5, 11, 14, 15, 16n2, 113, 115, 125n2,4, 126–141, 155n7, 174n10, 202n3, 245n12
Chang, Shu-chi, 140n2
  See also Zhang Shuqi
Charleston, 8
Chen, Chi-Kwan, 240
Chen Shaoping, 187
Chi, Chen, 240
Chiang Kai-shek, 131, 258n7
Chiang Yee, 135, 141n15,20
Chicago Society of Etchers, 236, 245n8
Chien, Chih-Yung, 181
Chien, Chun-Wuei Su, 181–82, 185, 186, 189n12–14
China
  abstract art in, 184–86, *184*, *185*
  "Anti-spiritual pollution campaign," 181
  arts and crafts from, interest in by US audiences, 129–30, 140n3
  Clinton's visit to, 6, 16n4
  as contact zone, 4
  contemporary art and influence of American art on, 187–88, 191, 192–93
  cultural diplomacy of, 128–29, 132–33, 139–40
  Cultural Revolution, 11, 178, 180, 183, 185, 198, 202, 243
  economic ascension of, 5
  education of US public about Chinese art, 11
  export market, art made for, 104
  imperial portraiture in, 103, *103*, 108n24, 227, 234
  imports from, historic and contemporary interest in, 6–7, *8*
  isolation of, 186
  language, written and spoken, 208–9, 212n8
  methods and techniques, adhering Chinese art style, 148
  Ming dynasty, 191–92
  official art style in, 183
  open-door policy, 186, 187
  painting methods and techniques, Chinese compared to Western, 137
  papermaking in, 179–80, *179*
  policies of and US policy toward, 6, 16n4
  racism in US and anti-colonial movements in India and China, 146
  ROCI China project, 11, 178, 181–87, 188n1, 189n12–14
  Roosevelt, gift of painting to from, 128, 131–32, *131*, 140n10
  traditional art techniques and development of national style, 131
  transcription systems and spelling of words, 55
  traveling exhibitions from, 265, 270n8
  travel to and transformation of worldviews, 10–11
  Western art, interest in by, 180–81
  Western contemporary art shows in, 178, 180–81
  Western culture, openness to, 105
  Westernization of arts in, 130, 131
  Yanbian University, teaching art at, 261–63, 269
  See also Empress Dowager Cixi
China Institute in America, 138
Chinese Art Club of California, 148
Chinese Exclusion Act, 127, 234
Chinese Museum, 129
Chinese Revolutionary Artists' Club, 156n22
Chinese Spring Festival, 197
Chinnery, George, 127
Chong, Fay, 240
Choo, Chunghi, 242
Circa 1492 exhibition, 9
civil disobedience doctrine, 33
civilized, semi-civilized, and uncivilized people, 83–84, *84*, 86, 91–92, *91*, 93n15
Cixi. *See* Empress Dowager Cixi
Clinton, Hillary, 6, 16n4
Clive, Robert, 32
Clive of India, 32
Coburn, Alvin Langdon, 222–23, *222*
Cohen, Warren, 3, 15, 16n5, 130
Cole, Thomas, 265
Colebrooke, H. T., 29
colonial art and architecture
  British influences on, 7–8
  Orientalism and, 23
  The Philippines and, 43–46
  Western artistic traditions and evaluation of qualities of, 23
colonial era
  India and US encounters comparison to Indo-British relationships, 27–29
  printed materials and the circulation of knowledge, 25–27
  racism in US and anti-colonial movements in India and China, 146
"Colored California" (Du Bois), 151
color theory, American models of, 48
Columbus, Christopher, 9, 75, 87
"Combines" (Rauschenberg), 179
commerce
  Asian trading partners, relationships with, 28, 75–77
  circulation of objects through and worldviews, 10–11, 69, 72–73, 74–75, 77–78
  knowledge, free trade, and, 75, 77–78
  Salem and commerce between China and the East Indies, 69–70, 71
communication, printed materials and the circulation of knowledge, 25–27
Conger, Sarah Pike, 102, 107n14, *227*, 228
Connaissance du Viêt-nam, 168, *169*
contact zones
  concept of, 10, 24
  destructive creation in, 10

examples of, 4
mobile contact zones, 11
power and power relations and, 24
printed materials and the circulation of knowledge, 25–27
productive relationships through exchanges in, 24
spectrum of, 10
types of interactions in, 10
Container Corporation of America, 240, 246n17
contemporary art
American art, influence of on Chinese art, 191, 192–93
international and nomadic artists, 6
readymade and contemporary art strategies, 182–84, *182*, *183*
Western art and authentic contemporary art, 178
Contemporary Art Museum in Honolulu, 245n12
Coomaraswamy, Amanda Kentish, 250, 255
Copley, John Singleton, 263, 265
Corné, Michele Felice, 77, *77*
Correa, Charles, 34
cosmopolitanism
concept of, 25
cultural exchange and, 24–26
ethnicity, invoking or repressing visual signifiers of and, 11
power and power relations and, 24–26, 228, 230n30
printed materials and the circulation of knowledge, 25–27
privilege and, 25, 228
solidarity and, 25
travel and, 10–11, 173, 225–26
universalism and, 25
virtual cosmopolitanism, 25–27
Crane Room, 224
creativity, Daoist view of, 56
Crotti, Jean, 55–56, 64n12–13
cultural diversity, cultural exchange, and globalization of culture, 21, 35n1
cultural exchange
asymmetrical exchanges, 24
breakdown of cultural blockade and ROCI, 187–88
cosmopolitanism and, 24–26
Eurocentrism and the modern world, 22–23
global community and, 27, 36n14
globalization of culture and, 21, 35n1
multiculturalism and, 24
multiple criss-crossings of ideas, 23
power and power relations and, 9, 10, 24
reciprocity of, 23–24, 29
scrutiny of own culture and, 35
cultural imperialism, 13–14, 163, 178
Cultural Revolution, 11, 178, 180, 183, 185, 198, 202, 243
cultural studies, post-structuralist deconstruction and, 23
cultural superiority, 9, 23, 27–28
culture, translation of, 209
DABU/TABU, 55–56, 64n12
Dada
as American aspect of Buddhism, 55
creativity, Daoist view of and, 56
Daoism and, 10, 53–54, 55
elements of and objects for, found or manufactured, 55, 56–57, *56*
as everything and nothing, 54–55
metaphor and, 57–58, 62–63
reality and, 62–63
as state of mind, 55
technology and, 57–58
understanding of, 55
Dada Almanac (Huelsenbeck), 55
Dalling, John R., 77
Dao de jing, 54, 56, 57, 59–60, 61–62, 63n9
Daoism/Taoism
aspects with appeal to artists, 56
bellows and, 59–60, *59*, 61
Buddhism, blending of with, 54
creativity, view of, 56
DABU/TABU, 55–56, 64n12
Dada and, 10, 53–54, 55
inter-alchemy, 55, 62
mental equilibrium, 62
principles of, 54
reality and, 54
spiritual perspectives of, 63n5
transcription systems and spelling of words, 55
understanding of, 53–54
yin and yang, 55, 58, *58*, 60–62
Dark Princess (Du Bois), 146
Date, Hideo
White Gardenias, 240
Davidson, Abraham
The Story of American Painting, 263, 270n3
Dearth, Henry Golden
Bronze Buddha, 235
Deng Xiaoping, 186, 187, *187*, 265
Dewey, George, 44
Dewey, John, 138
Dewing, Thomas Wilmer
Before Sunrise, 221
The Four Sylvan Sounds, 221
Lady in White, 235
The Necklace, 235
Dey, Mukul, 235, 245n8
Dey, Ramdulal, 28, 76
de Zayas, Marius, 58, 59
dialogic process, 26
dime novels, 85
Doane, Ralph Harrington, 40
Doi, Isami, 240
Near Coney Island, 239
The Wayward Muse, 246n15
Dong Qichang, 192
Doshi, Balkrishna, 34, 35
Doshisha University, teaching art at, 261–63, 266–69, *267*, 270n9–10
Douglas, Aaron, 145, 155n8
Dow, Arthur Wesley, 249, 250

Dream House (Young and Zazeela), 254–55, *255*
drypoint etching, 236
Du Bois, W. E. B., 144, 146
"Colored California," 151
Crisis, 151, 153
Dark Princess, 146
Duchamp, Marcel, 53, 54–56, 56, 61
Bicycle Wheel, 57
The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, 58
Coffee Mill, 57–58, 64n20
"delay in glass," 62–63
Étant donnés, 62
Fountain, 61–62, *61*, 64–65n31–32
readymade strategy, 183
Duchamp, Suzanne, 55–56, 61
Dunn, Nathan, 129, 140n3
DuPont upholstery line "Cambodia," 173
Durgaprasad Ghose (Pal), *28*
Dutch learning, 85
Dutch traders and cartographers, 83–84, 85, 93n11

Eakins, Thomas, 263, 265
Eames, Charles, 33
Eames, Ray, 33
easel painting, academic study of, 8
East Coast Asian American Art Project (ECAAAP), 237–38
Eastern Bloc
art of, 178
breakdown of cultural blockade and ROCI, 187–88
East India Marine Society
activities of, 70–71
artifact collection and museum for objects, 10, 71–79, *72*, *73*, *74*, *76*, 78n6–8, 79n15
Asian trading partners, relationships with, 75–77
formation of and membership in, 70
meanings of collection for society members, 74–75
meetings of, 69–70, 74–75, 78, 78n1, 79n20
East–West terminology, 13–14
Egyptian reserve heads, 149, 150
Eight American Artists exhibition, 264, 270n5
'85 Movement, 183, 205
Elkins, Henry, 72
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 30, 31
Empress Dowager Cixi, 100–106, 107n11–13, 108n25
Carl's portrait of, 102, 105, 107–8n15–16, 234, 243
distribution of images of, 101–102, 107n13, 228
The Empress Dowager of China, Cixi (Vos), 10–11, 97–98, *98*, 102–6, 107–8n15, 108n20–22, 109n28,30–32, 227
Le Rire front cover, 101, *101*
The Ocean is the Dragon's World (Liu), 243, *243*
photographs, 227–28, *227*
Enlightenment, 25, 29
ethnicity. *See* race and ethnicity
Europe
art, European influences on, 3, 7
demography of US and ancestors from, 6
Eurocentrism and the modern world, 22–23
Evans, William T., 234, 235, 245n5
The Exhibition of Japanese Paintings and Sculpture, 264–65
exoticism, 5, 9, 31–32, 83, 114–15, 124, 173
Ezawa, Kota, 244
LYAM 3D, 244

Federal Art Project, Works Progress Administration, 151–54, 157n30–31,33–34, 239–40, 246n15
Feng Guodong, 185, 187
Fenollosa, Ernest, 17n8, 222, 250
Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 245n12
Flexner, James T.
The Pocket History of American Painting, 262–63, 270n1,3
Fong, Wing Gig, 240
Fortune magazine, 120–21, 122
Foster, Willis, 152
Frankenstein, Alfred, 137
Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, 132, 140n10
Freer, Charles Lang
collection of, 41, 217–19, 222–23
correspondence and interchange between Japanese artists and, 221–24, *223*
Dewing, relationship with, 221
East–West narrative of collecting by, 219
Japan, travel to by, 223–26, *223*
portrait of, *222*, 223
restrictions placed on collection by, 218
Whistler, relationship with, 217, 219
Freer Gallery of Art (Smithsonian Institution)
aesthetic harmonies among the objects in, 217–18, 222–23
collections and resources, 219–22, 229n8, 245n1
connection to Sackler Gallery, 218, 228n1
A Long and Tumultuous Relationship: East–West Interchanges in American Art conference, role in, 4
marketing slogan of, 217, 228n1
opening of, 217
organization of collections, 218, 222
Peacock Room (Whistler), 219–21, *220*, 224
photographs of Japan in, 225–28, *226*, *227*
restrictions placed on collection by Freer, 218
Frost, Rosamund, 119–20, 120
Fu Baoshi, 131
Fukuzawa Yukichi, 85, 86–88
Sekai kunizukushi, 86–87

Gandhi, Mahatma, 33, 240
Gao Jianfu, 131
Gao Minglu, 178, 184–85
Gardner, Isabella Stewart, 12–13, *12*
Garth, John, 137
Garvey, Marcus, 146
Gee, Elizabeth, *145*, 146–47, 156n12,15
Gee, Yun, 240, 246n16
Indo-China, 246n16

Gellatly, John, 219, 235, 245n6
Gill, Irving, 45
Ginkō, Adachi
The Strange Tale of the Castaways, 88–89, *88*, *89*, 90
Ginsberg, Allen, 249
Glass, Philip, 33
global community, 27, 36n14
globalization
American popular culture and, 261–62
Asian American identity politics and, 257
cultural exchange and globalization of culture, 21, 35n1
technology, the closeness of Asian nations, and, 5–6
glocalization, 269
Golden Gate International Exposition, 144
Goo, Gwen-Lin
Semblance, 241
Grand Canyon, 31
Graves, Morris, 133, 237, 245n10, 249, 264
Folded Wings—Memory—& the Moon Weeping, 237
Great Britain
colonial art and architecture, British influences on, 7–8
India and US encounters, comparison to Indo-British relationships, 27–29
Indian art history and British colonial relationships, 27
Queen Victoria, distribution of images of, 102, 107n13
Great Ideas campaigns, 240, 246n17
Great Ideas of Eastern Man, 240
Great Ideas of Western Man, 240
Greek art, 23
Griffin, Walter Burley, 34
Grotell, Maija, 242
Gu, Wenda
Cultural Transference—A Neon Calligraphy Series, 205, 210–12, *210*, 213n13–14, 16–17, 20
Forest of Stone Steles: Retranslation and Rewriting of Tang Poetry, 205, *206*, 207–10, *207*, *208*, 211, 212, 212n6, 213n11
transmission of influences and ideas through artwork of, 11
transnational experience of, 205, 208
united nations series, 205–7, *206*, 212n3, 213n20
Gu Dexin, *184*, 185–86, 187
Gunga Din, *31*, 32
Guston, Philip, 123, 192, 197
Gysin, Brion, 253

Hanhardt, John, 244
Hara Tomitarō, 223–24, *223*
Hare, David, 270n5
Harmon Foundation, 138, 143, 155n8, 157n33
Harvard Art Museums, 97, 104
Hassam, Childe
Tanagra, 235
Hausmann, Raoul, 54
He Duoling, 198–200
A House with a Loft, *200*
Snow Goose, *200*
Spring Wind Has Been Awakened, 198–200, *199*
Youth, 200, *200*
Heidegger, Martin, 29
Henry and Nancy Rosin Collection, 226
Higa, Karin, 237
High Fiber exhibition, 242
Hill, Thomas
Irrigating at Strawberry Farm, 41
Hinduism
articles of faith, questioning of, 30
Emerson's interest in, 30
interest in by US, 30–31, 251, 254–55
Hirasuna, Delphine, 242
Hiratsuka, Un-ichi, 241–42
Key Bridge in Winter, 242
Washington Monument, 242
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Smithsonian Institution), 239, 245n1, 246n16, 20, 25
Hodges, Benjamin, 72, 73, 77
Hofmann, Hans, 180, 241
Hollywood and images of India, 31–32, *31*
Homer, Winslow, 263, 265
The Chinese in New York, 233–34
Honolulu Academy of Art, 245n12
Hood, Marlowe, 184, 185, 186
Hopper, Edward, 265
Horan, Claude, 242
Horiuchi, Paul, 141n20
House in the Garden exhibition, 265
Hsieh, Tenching
Punching the Time Clock on the Hour, *251*
Huelsenbeck, Richard, 55
Huet, Henri Giles, 167
humor, Zhuangzi's use of, 54
Hu Shih, 133, 138
Hyde, Helen, 222, 236
Alley in Chinatown, 234
The Sauce-Pan Shop, *236*

Igarta, Venancio, 240
Freedom! 240
Ikegawa, Shiro, 240
imitation, 191–92, 202
immigration and migrants
Asian immigrants, 256
imperialism and, 7
imperialism
artistic interchange and, 9, 10
cultural imperialism, 13–14, 163, 178, 252
migrants, immigration, and, 7
Orientalism and, 252–53, 258n4
Impressionists, Asian influences on works by, 130
India
architecture and Indo-US relationships, 33–35, *34*
art history and British colonial relationships, 27
as contact zone, 4
Eurocentrism and the modern world, 22–23

films and Hollywood's image of, 31–32, *31*
Indian philosophy, reception of Americans to, 29, 30–31, 251, 254–55
influences on American art, 255
non-cooperation movement in, 33
photographic documentation of, 32, *32*
racism in US and anti-colonial movements in India and China, 146
Transcendentalism, discovery of by US, 24, 27, 30–31
travel to, 12–13
Twain's characterization of, 28–29, 30
US, trade relationships between, 28, 36n16
US and American Dream, interest in by, 32–33
US encounters, 23–24, 26, 27–29
India International Centre, *34,* 35
"Indian Superstition" (Emerson), 30
Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, 32
Industrial Revolution, material comforts, and cultural superiority, 27
Inokuma, Genichiro, 240
International Style in India, *22*, 33–35, *34*
Iwata, Kiyomi, 242

Jacques, Bertha, 236
The Jade Mountain (Bynner), 208
James, William, 31, 37n27
Japan
art from, US interest in, 7
blacks, images and representation of, 81, 83, 89–92, *89*, *91*, 92n5
bombing of, 7, 258n7
closing of borders and isolation of, 81, 85
as contact zone, 4, 256
Doshisha University, teaching art at, 261, 266–69, *267*, 270n9–11
Dutch, contact with, 85
imports from, historic and contemporary interest in, 6–7, 235
modernization of, 85–86
Native Americans, images and representation of, 81, 83, 85–89, *87*, 90, 92, 92n5
opening of by Perry, 7, 81–82, 90, 91–92
painting styles of artists in Tokyo, 120
photographs of, 225–28, *226*, *227*
post-war enthusiasm for Japanese culture, 122–24
print movement and Whistler, 222
self image of, 11, 81, 84, 92
traveling exhibitions from, 264–65
travel to, 223–26, *223*
US economic and political ties to, 256
Western correspondence and interchange between Japanese artists and dealers, 221–23, *223*
Westerners in, woodblock images of, 82–83, *82*, 88–89, *88*, *89*, 90–91, *91*
world map and hierarchy of people from different nations, 83–84, *84*, 92n8
World War II and treatment of Japanese American artists, 115–22, *121*, 124, 125n4, 242
Yōga (Western painting) movement, 116
Japanese American National Museum, 237, 245n12
Jean Shin: Common Threads exhibition, 244
Jeffers, Robinson, *200*
Jiang Xiaojian, 202–203n8
Johnson, Nelson T., 132
Johnson, Sargent
African subject matter and style in works by, 143–44, 144, 146–50, *147*, 153, 154, 156n17
Anderson, 149
Asian subject matter and style in works by, 143, 144–45, 146–47, 150–51, 153–54
Chester, 146–50, *147*, 156n15,17
children, sculptures of, 143, *144*, 145–51, *145*, 156n15
Defiant, 157n33
Elizabeth Gee, *147*, 148–49, 158n12,15
Esther, 151
Forever Free, 152–54, *153*, 157n33–34
Head of a Boy, 146, 150–51, *150*
Medal of First Award for Sculpture, 149, 156n22–23
Mother and Child, 157n33
multicultural identity, adoption of, 11, 154
multicultural subject matter and style in works by, 142–45, 147, 148, 151, 154, 156n15
Negro Woman, 154
New Negro movement and, 143–44, 146
Pearl, 143, *144*, 145–46, 147, 150, 151, 155n8, 156n15
San Pablo Park, life in, 146, 155–56n11–12
Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project activities, 151–54, 157n30–31, 33–34
Johnston, Harriet Lane, 234–35
Jung, Carl, 250, 253

Kahn, Albert, 32, *32*
Kahn, Louis I., 34–35
National Assembly Building, *22*, 34–35
Kamekura, Yusaku, 240
Kandinsky, Wassily, 29, 36n14
Kaneko, Jun, 242
Kanemitsu, Matsumi "Mike," 122–24, 240, 241, 246n22
Quarter to Five, 123, *123*
Santa Anita Yesterday & Today, 241
Kanvinde, A. P., 34
Kan'ya, Morita, 88–90
Kayama, Matazo, 240
Kennedy, John F., 162, 164–65
Kerouac, Jack, 249
Kim, Elaine H., 113–14
Kimura, Keichi
Hawaii, 246n17
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 33
Kingman, Dong, 141n20, 192, 239, 245n13
Bridge Over River, 239
Station Platform, 239
Kipling, Rudyard, 28, 32
Kline, Franz, 7, 122, 123
knowledge, commerce, and free trade, 75, 77–78
Koliang Yih, 194

Korean Association of Historians of Western Art, 265–66
Kos, Paul
Sound of Ice Melting, *251*
Kuniyoshi, Yasuo, 119–22, 124, 239, 245n13
Rape, 120–22, *121*
Relaxing, 119–20, *120*, 121
Remains of Lunch, *238*, 239
Kusama, Yayoi, 16n3, 246n25

La Farge, John, 235
Asian influences on works by, 12, 130, 249
The Last Waterlilies, 133, 141n13
Peonies in the Wind with Kakemono Borders, 235
Water Lily in Sunlight, 235
Lambert, Leon J., 42–43, 48
Park and Colonist Band, 42–43, *42*
Langley, Samuel P., 217, 218
Lang Lu Sun, 202–203n8
Laufer, Berthold, 194
Leaves of Grass (Whitman), 31, 37n25
Lebel, Robert, 62
Lee, Anthony W., 7, 10
Lee, Cliff, 242
Lee, Nikki S., 246n25
Léger, Fernand, 194
Liang Zuting, 202–203n8
Li Bai, 197, 209
Li Cheng, 192
Li Jinfa, 202–203n8
Lin Yutang, 133
Lipton, Seymour, 270n5
literati painting, 191, 195–96
Liu, Hung, 243
The Ocean is the Dragon's World, 243, *243*
Liu Haisu, 130, 131, 135, 140n6, 141n16
Liu Kaiqu, 202–203n8
Lives of Bengal Lancer, 32
Li Xianting, 178, 183–84
Li Yishi, 130, 131
Sketch of Zhang Shuqi, *128*, 130–31
Locke, Alain, 144, 146, 147–48, 149–50, 156n17
Lodge, Henry Cabot, Jr., 170
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 132, 245n12
Luce, Henry, 133
Lum, Bertha, 222, 236
Luneta and gazebo landscapes, 41–42
Luo Jialun, 131

Machida, Margo, 237
Mack, Ruth, 164
Ma Kelu, 184, 185, 187, 189n21
Mandarin language, 208–209, 212n8
marine societies, 70, 78n3
See also East India Marine Society
Marsh, Joanna, 244
Martin, Agnes, 249
Martinelli, Ezio, 270n5
Masterpieces of Korean Art exhibition, 265
Matisse, Henri, 194
Matsukata, Miye, 242, 245n13
McIntire, Samuel, 77, *77*
Mehring, Walter, 55
Melmac plastic dinnerware, 161
Melville, Herman, 31, 37n26
Merce Cunningham Dance Company, 178–79
Merton, Thomas, 250, 251
migrants. *See* immigration and migrants
Millet, Jean Francois, 131
Ming, Wang, 240
Miró, Joan, 194
Mitchell, Samuel Augustus, 86, 93n15
Mitter, Partha, 10
Much Maligned Monsters, 23
The Triumph of Modernism, 25
Mitter, Raj Kissen, 28
Mizuno, Mineo, 242
Moby Dick and Vishnu's Matsya incarnation, 31, 37n26
Mokuami, Kawatake, 88–89
Mondrian, Piet, 29
Montgomery, E. J., 154
Moser, Joann, 237, 243
Motherwell, Robert, 123, 124
Mowbray, H. Siddons
Idle Hours, 235
Moy, Seong, 240, 241, 245n13, 246n21
Kuang Kung, 241, *241*
Mrs. Harry C. Norcross Collection, 226, *226*
Much Maligned Monsters (Mitter), 23
Mu Ch'i, 12
multiculturalism
cultural exchange and, 24
Johnson's multicultural subject matter and style, 143–45, 147, 148, 151, 154, 156n15
multicultural practices of black artists, 11, 150, 154
Munakata, Shiko, 240
Munroe, Alexandra, 7
Munsell, A. H., 48
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 180
museums, partnerships between US and Asian, 16n3

Nakagawa, Ikuyo, 250
Nakamizo, Fugi, 239
Nakashima, George, 34, 242
Nakashima, Tom, 246n24
Sanctuary at Western Sunset, 246n24
Nankoku, Hidai, 123–24
Nath, Pran, 254
National Art Museum of China, 180–81, 182, *182*
National Assembly Building, *22*, 34–35
National Gallery of Art, 9
National Institute of Design, 33
nationalism, printed materials, and the circulation of knowledge, 25
National Museum of American History, 245n1
Native Americans
civilized, semi-civilized, and uncivilized people, 86
ethnographic project by Vos and, 99
images and representation of, 85–89, *87*, *88*, 90
Japanese responses to images of, 11, 81, 83, 92, 92n5

Nehru, Jawaharlal, 33, 34
Neil, T. A., 28
New Analysts Group, 187
New Deal art programs. *See* Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project
New Negro movement, 143–44, 146–50, 152, 154
New World Metaphysics, 30
New York
as center of American art studies, 8
Chinatown, paintings based on scenes from, 233–34, 245n3
Ng, Win, 240
Two Sides of Three Blocks #3, 240–41
Nichols, George, 76
Noguchi, Isamu, 192, 196–97, 240, 245n13
focus of scholars' attention on, 7
Grey Sun, 240
Noguchi Museum, 245n12
Nomura, Kenjiro
The Farm, 240
Nomura Michi, 224
Nomura Yōzō, 223–24, *223*
No Name Group, 184
Nusserwanjee Maneckjee Wadia, 76–77, *76*, 79n25

Obama, Barack, 6
Obata, Chiura, 115–18, 119, 124, 141n20, 156n22, 239
Setting Sun, 115–16, *115*, 124
Sunset, Water Tower, Topaz, 117
Yosemite and national parks landscapes, 239, 245n14
Obata Rokuichi, 116
Office of War Information (OWI) propaganda posters, 121–22, *121*
Okada, Kenzo, 240, 246n19
Grey, 240
To Point, 240
Okakura Kakuzō, 252
The Book of Tea, 252
The Ideals of the East, 252
Okamura, Arthur, 240, 246n20
Stray Cur, Eucalyptus Grove, 240
O'Keeffe, Georgia, 61, 265
Okubo, Miné, 117–19, 122, 124
Fortune magazine illustrations, 120–21, 122
Mother and Cat, 117–19, *117*
People were in Shock, *118*, 119
Olcott, Henry, 31
Ono, Yoko, 246n25
Oppenheimer, Robert, 30, 31
Orientalism
American art and, 6, 147, 221, 234–37, 252–53, 258n3–4
colonial art and architecture and, 23
concept of, 23, 252–53
imperialism and, 258n4
power and power relations and, 258n4
Oriental Renaissance, 26, 29–30

Pacific Northwest, 4, 8
Pacific Rim, 8, 144–45, 154
Paik, Nam June, 244
Electronic Superhighway, 244
Megatron/Matrix, 244
Zen for TV, 244
Painting in the Chinese Manner (Zhang and Chiang), 135, 141n15
Pal, Sri Ram
Durgaprasad Ghose, *28*
Panama Pacific International Exposition, 144
Pan Tianshou, 131
Park and Colonist Band (Lambert and Springer), 42–43, *42*
Parker, Luther, 41, 45, 46, 50n5
Parker, Maud, 41, 45, 46, 50n5
Parsons, William E., 43–45, 46, 47, 50n10
"Passage to India" (Whitman), 31
Paxton, William M.
The Figurine, 245n7
Peacock Room (Whistler), 219–21, *220*, 224
Peale, Charles Willson, 72–73
Pearl Harbor, 119, 120, 132, 242, 258–59n7
Pell, Alfred Duane, 245n6
Perry, Matthew Calbraith, 7, 81–82, 90, 91–92
Peters, John R., 129
Philadelphia, 28, 72, 129, 140n3
Philippine-American War, 39, 41–44, 46
Philippine Islands
architecture and landscapes in, 39–46, *42*, *45*, *46*, *47*, 50n4–5, 50n10
art and craft education and sale of works by schoolchildren, 10, 48–49, 51n19
art from, US interest in, 7
church landscapes, 45–46, *46*, 51n14
colonialist political agenda and transformation of, 10, 39–49, 50n5
colonization of by US, 7
as contact zone, 4
Flag Law, 49
holiday celebrations in, 41–42, 47–48, *48*, 49, 51n21
Iwahig Penal Colony, *42,* 43
schools and US social engineering, 40, 46–49, *48*, 51n16,19,21
philosophies, Asian
discovery and use of by the West, 22–23, 24, 29, 33–35, 250
Indian philosophy, reception of Americans to, 29, 30–31
Pho, Binh, 242
Picabia, Francis, 55, 58
Comic Wedlock, 58, *58*
"Dada Manifesto," 54
Edtaonisl, 58
Ici, C'est Ici Stieglitz Foi et Amour, 59–60, *59*, 64n24
Stieglitz Gallery show, 58–59
Udnie, 58
Picasso, Pablo, 58, 194
Piper, Adrian, 249
The Pocket History of American Painting (Flexner), 262–63, 270n1,3
Pollock, Jackson, 122, 123, 180

Portrait of Lirongbao's Wife, *103*
Pound, Ezra, 249, 250
Pratt, Mary Louise, 24, 25
print culture, circulation of knowledge, and cosmopolitanism, 25–27, 82–83
printed materials. *See* books and printed materials
privilege, cosmopolitanism and, 25, 228

Qi Baishi, 131, 196
Qin Yufen, 185, 187

race and ethnicity
  component of Asian American art as, 113–14, 124
  cosmopolitanism and visual signifiers of ethnicity, 11, 146–51, 223–24
  ethnographic imagery and, 81–84, 99–100, 104, 107n5–6
  post-war enthusiasm for Japanese culture and art, 122–24
  racism in US and anti-colonial movements in India and China, 146
  stereotypes and, 9, 81
  World War II and treatment of Japanese American artists, 115–22, *121*, 124, 125n4, 242
Rauschenberg, Robert
  Central Academy of Graphic Art, lecture at, 180
  combine technique, 179, 186, *187*
  Deng Xiaoping portrait for *Time* magazine, 186, *187*
  generation gap between Chinese artists and, 189n21
  Gold Standard, 179
  Japanese Clayworks, 182
  Kabal American Zephyr series, 182
  Merce Cunningham Dance Company, work with, 178–79
  readymade and contemporary art strategies, 182–84, *182*
  7 Characters, 179–80, *179*, *180*, 183
  Seven-Person Exhibition, visit to, 184–86, *184*, 189n21
  Summerhall series, 182
  "Tobago Statement," 176–78
Rauschenberg Overseas Cultural Exchange (ROCI), 11, 177–88, *182*, 188n1, 188n5, 189n12–14
Raymond, Antonin, 34
readymade and contemporary art strategies, 182–84, *182*, *183*
Reich, Steve, 33
Reid, Robert
  The Mirror, 245n7
  The Violet Kimono, 235
Reif, Rita, 172
Reinhardt, Ad, 122, 249
Renaissance Society, 193, 194
Ren Bonian, 131
Renwick Gallery, 242, 245n6
Rhoades, Katherine, 222
Riley, Terry, 254
Rivera, Diego, 118, 148–49, 156n22
ROCI. *See* Rauschenberg Overseas Cultural Exchange (ROCI)
Roosevelt, Alice, 228
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 128, 131–32, 140n10
Roosevelt, Theodore, 44, 228
Ross, Nancy Wilson, 250
Roy, Rammohun, 29, 30
Russel Wright Program Silk Screen Workshop, 162
Ryder, Albert Pinkham, 235
Ryder, Worth, 116–17

Sackler Gallery. *See* Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Sadahide, Utagawa, 90–91
Saff, Donald, 179, 180, 189n8,14
Said, Edward, 23, 252, 258n3–4
Salem, Massachusetts, *See also* East India Marine Society
  commerce and, 69–70, 71
  as contact zone, 4
Samant, Mohan B., 240
San Francisco
  blacks in, attitudes of toward Asian neighbors, 151
  Chinatown, paintings based on scenes from, 4–5, *5*, 234
  cosmopolitan city, development as, 153
  racism, opposition to in, 149
San Francisco Art Association, 144, 149
Sarabhai, Gautam, 34
Sarazin-Levassor, Lydie Fischer, 62
Schamberg, Morton Livingston
  God, 56–57, *56*
Schertel, Barbara, 154
Schopenhauer, Arthur, 29
Schwab, Raymond, 26
Sekai kunizukushi (Fukuzawa), 86–87
Sekimachi, Kay, 242
Sélavy, Rrose, 61
Seven-Person Exhibition, 184–86, *184*, 189n21
Shanghai Art Academy, 130
Shankar, Ravi, 33
Shimomura, Roger, 242–43
  Diary, 242
Shin, Jean, 244
  Chemical Balance III, 244
  Jean Shin: Common Threads, 244
Shiryû, Morita, 123–24
Sloan, James Blanding, 236
Smithsonian American Art Museum
  American art with Asian subject matter and style, 233–37, *234*, *236*
  Asian American art, 237–44, *238*, *241*, *243*
  collections and resources for study, 11, 233–244
  A Long and Tumultuous Relationship: East–West Interchanges in American Art conference, role in, 4
  Research and Scholars Center, 244, 245n1
Smithsonian Institution
  Archives of American Art, 152, 153, 238, 241, 245n1, 246n21
  collections and resources for study, 244
  collections and resources for study of East–West interchanges, 11

museums of Asian art, 218
See also specific museums and galleries
Snyder, Gary, 250
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 7, *14*, 15, 249–250, *250, 256*
See also *The Third Mind* exhibition
Song dynasty, 41, 191, 197, 213n11
"Song of Myself" (Whitman), 29
Sonneman, Eve, 245n3
Southeast Asia, handicraft production in, 161–62
South Korea
translation of books for, 262–63
traveling exhibitions from, 265
Wonkwang University, teaching art at, 261–63, *262*, 266, 269
Spartali, Christina, 220, *220*
Springer, Milton, 42–43, 48
Park and Colonist Band, 42–43, *42*
Stackpole, Ralph, 149
Staged Stories exhibition, 242
Stanley, Henry Morton, 28
Stein, Doshi, and Bhalla, 35
Stein, Joseph Allen, 35
Stieglitz, Alfred, 58–2 *59*, 64n24, 265
Fountain, 61–62, *61*, 64–65n32
Songs of the Sky in Five Pictures, *60*
The Story of American Painting (Davidson), 263, 270n3
Strolling to a Lakeside Gazebo, 41
Stuart, Gilbert, 28, 36n16, 76, 265
Sugimoto, Hiroshi, 246n25
Sullivan, Louis, 34
sumi (black liquid ink on paper), 123, 124, 241
Sundown, 32
Sun Yat Sen, 151–52, 153, 154, 202–203n8
surf boats, 12–13, *12*
Suzuki, D. T., 250
Suzuki, Sakari
Merrick Road, 239–40
Sze, Mai-mai, 240

TABU/DABU, 55–56, 64n12
Tactile Sensation Group, 187
Taft, William Howard, 228
Tagore, Rabindranath, 202, 236, 240
Takaezu, Toshiko, 240, 242
Tam, Reuben, 241, 246n20
The Shores of Light, 241
Tamotzu, Chuzo, 241
Tang dynasty poetry. See Gu (*Forest of Stone Steles*)
Taoism. *See* Daoism/Taoism
Taylor, Jill Bolte, 63n5
teaching and art education
American art, teaching of in East Asia, 261–70, *262*, *267*
approaches to, changes in, 11
art and craft education in the Philippines, 10, 48–49, 51n19
challenges of, 262–63
Doshisha University, teaching art at, 261–63, 266–69, *267*, 270n9–10
textbooks for, 262–63, 266
traveling exhibitions and, 263–65, 270n4,8
Wonkwang University, teaching art at, 261–63, *262*, 266, 269
Yanbian University, teaching art at, 261–63, 269
technology
Dada and, 57–58
globalization, the closeness of Asian nations, and, 5–6
teaching American art and, 263
Temple of Heaven (Altar of Heaven), 196
Teng Baiye, 193–96, *193*, 202–203n7–8, 237
Teraoka, Masami, 243
MacDonald's Hamburgers Invading Japan/Tokyo Ginza Shuffle, 243
Oiran and Mirror, from the AIDS Series, 243
Tale of 1000 Condoms/Geisha and Skeleton, 243
Teruo, Fujieda, 123
Thayer, Abbott Handerson, 235
The Theatre of Eternal Music, 254
The Third Mind catalogue/book, 249, 250–51, 252–53
The Third Mind exhibition, 11, *14*, 15, 53, 249–59, *250*, *251*, *255*, *256*
Thoreau, Henry David, 30, 33, 250, 251, 255
Walden, 30
Time magazine, 186, *187*
Ting, Walasse, 240
Tobey, Mark, 133, 192, 193–95, 237, 245n10, 249, 264
Advance of History, *194*, 195
Broadway Norm, 195
Canticle, 237
white writing, 133, 195, 237
Toward Cathay exhibition, 9
Transcendentalism, 24, 27, 30–31
transnationalism, 143–44, 162–63, *163*, 167, 172–73, 192, 202
travel
to Asia, 9, 225–28, *226*, *227*, 256–57
cosmopolitanism and, 10–11, 173, 224–26
cultural tendencies and expectations, 12–14
landscape painting, scholarly interest in and, 7
transformative experience of ocean-crossing and worldviews, 10–11, 256–57
The Triumph of Modernism (Mitter), 25
Tryon, Dwight, 223, 225, 229n18
Twachtman, John Henry, 235
Twain, Mark, 27, 28–29, 30
Tzara, Tristan, 54, 55, 63

Uchida Kuichi, 227
Uchima, Ansei, 240
Unitarianism, 73
United China Relief, 132
United Nations (fine-art advertising campaign), 240
United Nations Economic and Social Council, 164, 174n12
United States (US)
architecture and Indo-US relationships, *22*, 33–35, *34*
Asia and history of, 258–59n7

Asian American population in, 3, 6, 16n5
Asian art, interest in by US audiences, 7, 14, 129–30, 140n3
Asianization of daily lives in, 3
Asian nations, relationships with, 3
Chinese art and education of US public about, 11, 128–29, 133, 135–39
globalization and American popular culture, 261–62
identity creation as former colony, 27–28
impact of Asian contacts on, 15
India, interest in US by, 32–33
India, trade relationships between, 27–29, 36n16
India, encounters with, 23–24, 26, 27–29
Indian philosophy, reception of Americans to, 29, 30–31
Japan, economic and political ties to, 256
liberty and equality championship by, 28
as Pacific power, 255–56, 258–59n7
population diversity and American art, 3
racism in US and anti-colonial movements in India and China, 146
Roosevelt, gift of painting to from China, 128, 131–32, *130*, 140n10
Transcendentalism and, 24, 27, 30–31
United States Information Agency (USIA), 262–63, 264
United States Information Service, 263
United States State Department, 161–62
Upanishads, 29, 30
Uyemura, Ken, 171
Uyemura, Michiko, 171

Vanderlyn, John
The Murder of Jane McCrea, 87–88, *88*, 89, 90, 94n21
Van Gogh, Vincent, 130, 131, 133
Vedanta societies, 252
Victoria, Queen, 102, 107n13
Vietnam
American cultural and economic influences in, 162, 164–65
as contact zone, 4
department store exhibition of handicrafts from, 173, 175n45
export market and handicraft production, 11, 161–62, 163–64, 169–73, 174n12
"Handicraft Program for Tourism" in, 162
handicrafts, production and distribution of, 161–62
mobility, modernity, and resources for people in, *163*, 165–67
refugees and, *163*, 164–69, *167*, *168,* 169
Russel Wright Program Silk Screen Workshop, 162
significance of, 164–65
tourism to, 162, 173
transnationalism and US-Vietnam handicraft program activities, 162–63, *163*, 167, 172–73
war in and US interest in art from, 7
virtual cosmopolitanism, 25–27
Vishnu's Matsya incarnation and Moby Dick, 31, 37n26
Vivekananda, Swami, 29, 252, 255
von Freytag-Loringhoven, Elsa
God, 56–57, *56*
Vos, Eleanor Kaikilani Graham, 99, *99*, 107n4
Vos, Hubert
career of, 98–99, 106
Chicago World's Fair, association with, 99
Eleanor Kaikilani Coney Graham Vos, 99, *99*, 104
The Empress Dowager of China, Cixi, 10–11, 97–98, *98*, 102–106, 107–108n15, 108n20–22, 109n28,30–32, *227*
ethnographic project, 99–100, 104, 107n5–6
painting style of, 97–99, 100, 105
training of, 98
Vroman, Adam Clark, 45
No. 3. Mission San Luis Rey de Francia, *45*, 45

Walden (Thoreau), 30
Waley, Arthur, 250
Walker, Josette, 161
Wang, Chun Wen, 242
Wang Linyi, 202–203n8
Wang Yidong, 200, 201
Wan Luyan, *184*, 185–86, 187
Warashina, Patti, 242, 245n13
Washington, George, 28, 36n16, 76
Watson, Margaret, 223, *223*
Watson-Schütze, Eva, 194
Wechsler, Jeffrey (Asian Traditions/Modern Expressions), 240
Weeks, Edwin Lord
Street Scene in India, 234–35, *234*
Wenda Gu, *see* Gu, Wenda
Weng, Wango, 138, 141n21
Western cultures, diversity of, 24
Weston, Edward, *200*
What's it All Mean (Wiley), 237
Whistler, James McNeill
Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Green, 221
Asian influences and, 130, 219, 249
collections of works by, 219, 229n8
focus of scholars' attention on, 7
Freer, relationship with, 217, 219
Japanese print movement and, 222
Peacock Room, 219–21, *20,* 224
La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine, 220–21, *220*
"Ten O'Clock" lecture, 217–18
Venus Rising from the Sea, *222*, 223
White Society (Baishe) and "whiteism" in paintings, 133, 141n13
Whitman, Walt
Indian philosophy, interest in by, 30–31
Leaves of Grass, 31, 37n25
"Passage to India," 31
"Song of Myself," 31

Wiles, Irving R.
Brown Kimono, 235
Wiley, William T., 16, 53, 237
Body Dharma, 237
There is no Buddha Out There, 237
What's it All Mean, 237
Wilkins, Charles, 29
Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, 23
Winkler, John, 234
Winstanley, William, 36n16, 76
Winther-Tamaki, Bert, 9, 13, 14, 15
Wonkwang University, teaching art at, 260–63, *262*, 266, 269
Wores, Theodore
The Chinese Fishmonger, 4–5, *5*, 234
Works Progress Administration, Federal Art Project, 151–52, 157n30,33, 239–40, 246n15
Wright, Frank Lloyd, 34–35, 172
Wright, Russel, 161–75, *166, 167, 168*
Wu Changshuo, 131
Wu Fuzhi, 131
Wu Pingren
History, *183*, 184
Wyeth, Andrew, *201*
Christina's World, 198, *198*, 200
impact of work by on Chinese painters, 192, 197–202
Wyeth, James, 200

Xuan Paper Mill, 179–80, *179*
Xu Beihong, 131
Xu Bing, 178, *182,* 182–83
Xuling, 227

Yamada, Shige, 242
Yanbian University, teaching art at, 261–63
Yōga (Western painting) movement, 116
Yokohama picture (*yokohama-e*), 82–83, *82*, 90–92
Yong, Lai, 127
Yoshida Hiroshi, 224
Yoshitoyo, Ichiryusai, 91
American Black Men (Amerika kuronbō), 91
Young, La Monte, 254–55
Dream House, 254–55, *255*
Yuh, Sun Koo, 242

Zazeela, Marian, 254–55
Dream House, 254–55, *255*
Zen Buddhism
development of, 55
interest in and influence of, 6, 12, 16, 53, 237, 242, 256
Zhang Daqian, 131
Zhang Shuqi, 126–41, *128, 136, 138*
Lone Cypress, 134, *135*
Messengers of Peace/A Hundred Doves, 128, 131–32, *131*, 137, 140n10–11
Painting in the Chinese Manner, 135, 141n15
Sketch of Zhang Shuqi (Li), *128*, 130–31
Sunflowers, 133–34, *134*
Zhang Wei, 178, 184–86, *184*, *185*, 187
Zhao Shao'ang, 131
Zhao Zuo, 192
Zhuangzi, 54, 55
Zhu Jinshi, 184, 185, 187, 189n21

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