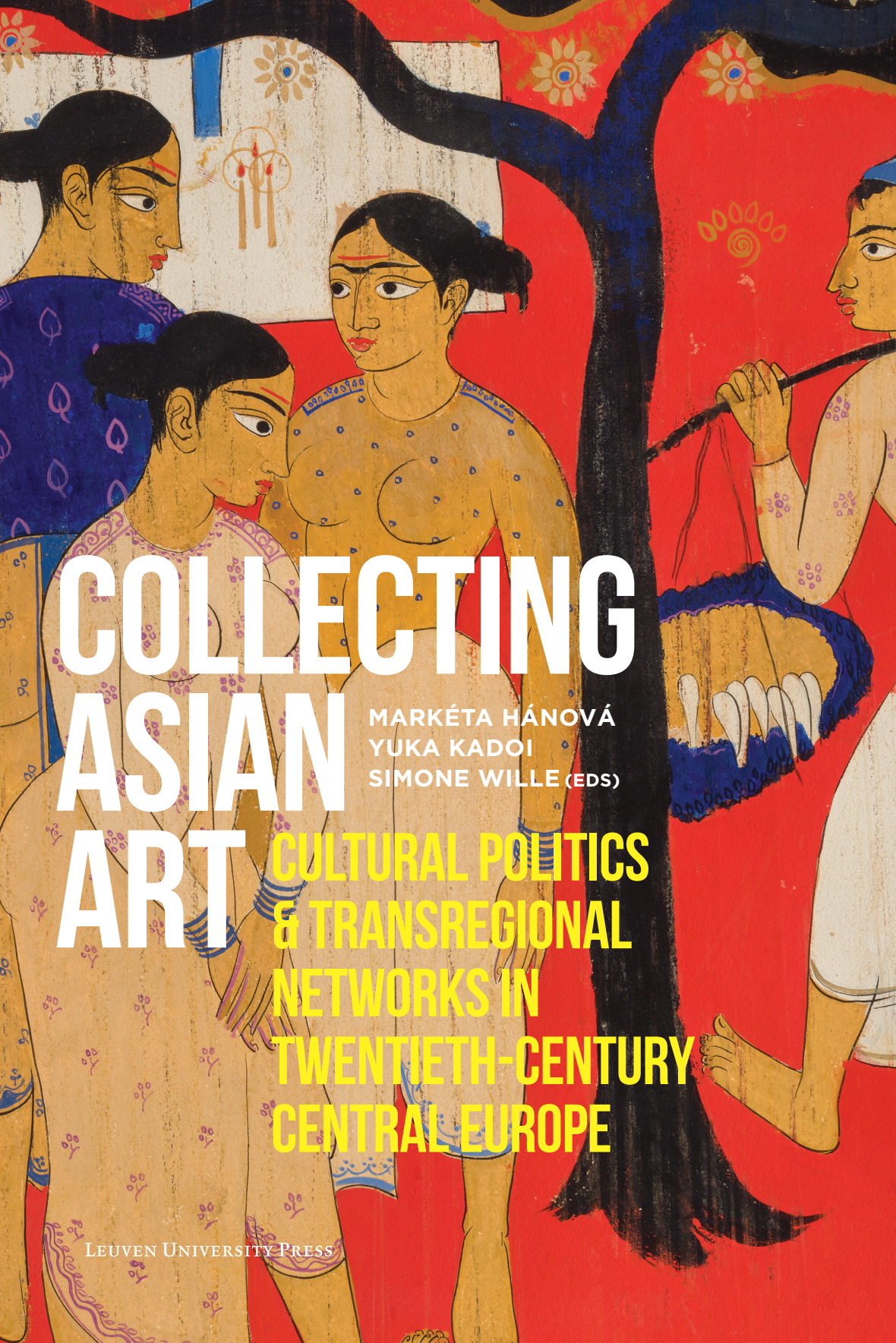

COLLECTING ASIAN ART

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YUKA KADOI
SIMONE WILLE (EDS)

CULTURAL POLITICS & TRANSREGIONAL NETWORKS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CENTRAL EUROPE

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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A collection of selected papers given to the conference "Collecting Asian Art in Prague: Cultural Politics and Transcontinental Networks in 20th Century Central Europe", organised by the National Gallery in Prague (NGP) and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) research project (P29536-G26) at the NGP from 17-18 June 2021.
This work was published with the support of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): [PUB 1021-P], and the KU Leuven Fund for Fair Open Access.

FWF Österreichischer Wissenschaftsfonds

Published in 2024 by Leuven University Press / Presses Universitaires de Louvain / Universitaire Pers Leuven. Minderbroedersstraat 4, B-3000 Leuven (Belgium).

ISBN 978 94 6270 378 0 (Paperback)
ISBN 978 94 6166 540 9 (ePDF)
https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461665409
D/2024/1869/3
NUR: 654

Layout: Crius Group
Cover design: Jason Anscomb
Cover illustration: V. S. Gaitonde, *Evening*, tempera on paper, 56 x 43 cm, National Gallery in Prague, inv. No. Vm 926 Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

Owing to the transregional and multi-linguistic coverage of this volume, stretching from Japan to the Czech lands, names and terms have been transliterated according to the their generally accepted, Anglicised usage. All quotes have been translated by the authors, unless otherwise noted. Apart from specific cases, original Chinese and Japanese characters, as well as the Arabic script, have not been used throughout the volume. Finally, both the editors and authors have made their best efforts to minimise stylistic variations throughout the volume, while each contributor has been encouraged to observe stylistic consistency within his/her own chapter.

COLLECTING ASIAN ART: CENTRAL EUROPE'S TRANSREGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Simone Wille

Examining collections of Asian art across Europe allows for research on multiple levels and for a series of narratives to unfold. For example, one can retrace how European merchants have imported luxury goods via overland and maritime trade routes since medieval times.[1] Alternatively, it is possible to look at the mechanisms by which Asian portable objects and paintings were moved and traded along colonial routes to Europe, where such items usually arrived both at imperial metropolises and at other capital cities, from whence they were distributed across Europe and even to North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[2] This is how a number of miscellaneous goods originating in Asia, both luxurious and utilitarian, found their way into private and state art collections in Central Europe during the interwar period, and this phenomenon reflects how the colonial dimension affected the emergence of nation states and their museum collections in this region. These trade mechanisms also show how closely these countries' economies and nationalisms were intertwined with the global condition.[3]

Collections of Asian art in European museums can further narrate personal and official encounters between protagonists from both continents, thereby placing agency at the heart of the discussion.[4] The study of collections has often been connected with the lives of individual collectors, and the complexity of human interaction reveals that the personal aspects involved in these processes often stretch beyond questions of power and authority. What collections of Asian art also illustrate is the transfer not only of art but also of knowledge. Moreover, they inform us about the curiosity and possibility of contact and exchange with what is lesser known.[5] In these collections art can therefore be seen as the very material through which transfer and exchange became manifest. Collections of Asian art thus provide points of departure for a spectrum of narratives to unfold.

By taking into consideration museum collections of Asian art in the region of Central Europe, rather than the well-known collections in Western European and North American museums,[6] this volume explores the dimensions of Central European connectedness across past and present political and cultural bound-

aries, with an approach that considers entangled history, the examination of encounters, and the study of cultural exchange and transfer under the changing cultural and political conditions from the pre-First World War to the post-Second World War period. The fact that this puts Central Europe's connection with Asia and the East in the centre of the discussion is significant and, when examined within collections of Asian art, can contribute to an understanding of the region that, in its own sense, sought to be globally connected.[7] This volume thus examines collections of Asian art in Central Europe, as developed since the late nineteenth century and as perceived through the study of transregional connections. A transregional approach allows us to overcome the limited image of the region by making connections with a seemingly disconnected world.[8] Furthermore, the transregional connections that are discussed through the activities and initiatives of collecting Asian art can be seen as processes that contributed to defining the region as distinct, thus enabling an investigation of the role that the collected material played in questions concerning not only aesthetics of modernity but also the entangled histories of art objects in museums.[9] Here, the transregional approach allows for an outward-looking perspective, one that opens the region to the world. Looking at the region not as a self-contained unit but defining it through its external relationships and its different entanglements, the contributions in this volume sketch out how these connections and entanglements developed and changed over time.

In their development from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, collections of Asian art in Central Europe are characterised by a striving for self-representation, both national and cultural, and therefore permit an investigation of the connection with political sovereignty and a nation-centred formation of identity. Rather than viewing collections of Asian art in Central Europe solely as the efforts and achievements of individual nations, they are considered here as a regional feature that stands out as distinct from Western European collections, especially in the way that they developed or progressed in the period after the Second World War. As a result, the image of this region as an isolated cultural landscape – which is particularly persistent in relation to the Cold War period – is replaced through the study of connections that transcend the region, thereby allowing us to critically engage with 'global art', a new field of critical inquiries that emerged in the late 2000s.[10] What constitutes 'global' in art has been intensively debated since the wake of the 'global turn' in the early 2010s, yet this debate has so far been predominantly led by Western art historians.[11] Although non-Western art historians have increasingly engaged with this debate, the question of 'globality' has provoked lively discussion among modernists and contemporary cultural theorists, who have swiftly responded to the 'global turn', perhaps more enthusiastically than classicists, medievalists, and early modern experts.[12]

Although our geographical focus centres on 'Central Europe', we consider this region as an extended space encompassing East, Central, and South-East Europe, regional and subregional spaces which have, until recently, often been neglected

in the context of global dynamics. However, there is an increase in scholarship with a focus on East Central Europe and their transregional connectivity, thereby making connections with global developments. Most of these efforts and research projects tend to be located in the field of historical research.[13] This subject began to be incorporated into the field of visual studies around 2010, thanks to pioneering efforts initiated by the late Piotr Piotrowski.[14] Within the subregion of Central Europe, we thus focus on collections of Asian art in Vienna, Prague, Berlin, Warsaw, Cracow, Budapest, and Ljubljana, where we have identified commonalities, both in the collecting strategies and in the shifts of cultural and political strategies. This reflects our understanding of the region of Central Europe as at the heart of European culture, without fixed geographical boundaries, but ethnically mixed and historically conditioned by Germanic, modern Slavic, and Gaelic cultures, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the former Habsburg Empire, of which Austria-Hungary and its capital, Vienna, was the heart. Our understanding and definition is therefore closely related to that of Matthew Rampley in his introduction to the new online journal *Art East/Central*, published at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University in Brno[15], but given the scope of our engagement with Asian art, it is important for us to foreground the interconnectedness of the region of Central Europe with Asia.

It is therefore important to note that the late nineteenth century was marked by a euphoria for Asian art, with an early focus on East Asia in general and Japan in particular. Following the emergence of collections of Asian art in Central Europe from the late nineteenth century onwards, this thereby guided our attention to regions and countries in Asia which, apart from Japan, are primarily China, North Korea, South Asia, and India, respectively. This is not to say that there is no object from other regions and countries from across Asia to be identified in collections of Asian art in Central Europe. Quite the contrary, in fact: the many collections of Asian art that are located in Central European museums cover the vast region of Asia – spanning East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia – and can be attributed to collecting activities that date as far back as the sixteenth century. However, according to our observations and to narrate the shifting regimes of value since the late nineteenth century, our focus has primarily remained on East, South and West Asia, as this has allowed us to identify common and often connected mechanisms of collection strategies and presentations. Our observations have further revealed that the development of transregional dynamics and challenges, which led to entanglements and connections between regions in Asia and in Central Europe, from the late nineteenth century until the end of the Cold War, differs greatly from developments in Western Europe. In relation to collections of Asian art, this becomes particularly clear in the period during the Cold War. Collections such as those in Prague, East Berlin, and Budapest show how closely their activities were linked to the official cultural politics of their governments. Their common orientation towards 'friendly' and non-aligned nations in Asia is ultimately a sign of the general orientation of

countries tied to the Soviet Union. Vienna, as a Central European metropolis at the gateway to the Eastern Bloc, is a case in point. While it proved instrumental and stimulating for the emerging collections in the neighbouring Central European metropolises, especially in their formative phase in the interwar period, the Austrian capital was unable to reconnect with its earlier collecting activities after the Second World War.[16] Here, it seems that the neighbouring countries and former Crown lands became much more active in establishing transregional connections with Asian countries. There the continued development of collections of Asian art was enthusiastically supported by governments, albeit with intentions that differed from those of the interwar years in that they were mainly politically motivated. This has proved to be a distinctive feature of the collections of Asian art in Central Europe, which is why selected contributions in this volume are devoted to this development.

Focusing on the transregional connectivity of Central Europe, as this volume aims to do, can also bring to the discussion the crisis of representation which set in globally from the late nineteenth century onwards. The orientation towards Asia in terms of its material and artistic culture provided stimulus and impetus, and primarily ensured a renewal of the Western creative industry. Collections of Asian art were put on display for the purpose of studying form and style and to invigorate the creative industry. Moreover, stylistic, formal, and ideological features of Asian art stimulated and encouraged modernist art and the avant-garde in its undertaking to challenge academic naturalism and classical norms of taste.[17] Like African and Oceanic art, Asian artefacts and aesthetics, accompanied by Eastern ideas, can be said to have been instrumental and influential in enabling new artistic movements in the West.[18] Asian art contributed significantly to the transformation of the conception of beauty and aesthetics in the Western world. Modernism's transcultural past is thus defined by aesthetic translations, and the success of Asian art across Europe succeeded in changing the Eurocentric narrative of a great Greco-Roman past as the centre of civilisation.[19] In the region of Central Europe, art historical engagement with Asia traditionally harks back to German *Morgenländische Forschung*, which can collectively be grouped as those scholars who dedicated their study to 'Oriental' art, encompassing areas stretching from Asia Minor to Japan. Their activities are influenced by positivist collecting and documenting work, to which Suzanne L. Marchand refers in detail in her study on German Orientalism.[20] It was in this milieu that art historians argued over the importance of either the Orient or Rome[21] in what became, in art historian Josef Strzygowski's case, a comparative approach. Alois Riegl, Strzygowski's teacher, had already emphasised the importance of ignored Hellenistic forms which involved rethinking, as Marchand aptly puts it, 'the Orient's creative impact on Western culture'.[22]

This volume has grown out of the international conference *Collecting Asian Art in Prague: Cultural Politics and Transcontinental Networks in Twentieth-Century Central Europe*, a hybrid meeting that was held in Prague in June 2021.[23] The con-

ference was organised by Markéta Hánová and Zdenka Klimtová, from the Collection of Asian Art at the National Gallery in Prague (NGP); Simone Wille, who used the occasion to conclude her five-year research project Patterns of Trans-regional Trails,[24] in which she closely collaborated with the NGP; and Yuka Kadoi, whose own research project and expertise complemented and enriched the Prague project.[25] As a team, they each have expertise with art from different areas in Asia and have long been studying the often dynamic engagement and connectedness that these Asian subregions have with Central Europe. Thus, the idea to collectively discuss these dynamics by adopting a transregional angle was perceived as a chance to contribute to a move to overcome nation-centred art histories. Furthermore, by viewing the Central European nations' collecting dynamics as a larger initiative over a longer period of time, the team acknowledges the importance of an art history of connections, thereby connecting with Sanjay Subrahmanyam's proposition of 'connected histories', rather than global history.[26] While the editors are interested in highlighting commonalities in collecting strategies in the Central European region, they also emphasise the regional singularity of the transregional interconnectedness that characterises this region in its connection to regions in Asia. Finally, all of us have also been trained from the outset as non-European art historians, so our volume includes fundamental Asian perspectives, rather than the narrow framework of collecting and art market studies in Central Europe.

THE LOCATION OF ASIAN ART IN CENTRAL EUROPE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

The organisation of this volume is thematic, but there is also an underlying unity of purpose, which, we hope, will help readers navigate it from essay to essay. The first section is dedicated to locating Asian art in early twentieth-century Central Europe via discourse and ideology, which is closely linked to discussions of Asian art and the crisis of representation occurring in the late nineteenth century. Yuka Kadoi sets out to explore the journey across regions of the famous Japanese art ideologue Kakuzo Okakura (also known as Okakura Tenshin; 1863–1913) in order to connect with his influential art historical text *The Ideals of the East: With Special Reference to the Art of Japan*, which addresses the crisis of pictorial representation in any visual culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Shifting Euro-centric perspectives on the rise of modernity around 1900, Kadoi begins with a late nineteenth-century universal map, where Japan is centrally located on the flat cartographic representation of the world, referring to the country's imaginative geographical self-positioning, much in the way that Edward Said used it in his critique of Orientalism, where imagined geographies refer to the perception of a space created by certain images, texts, or discourses. The discourse in Japan at this transitional time after the Meiji Restoration was carried by both Western and Eastern orientation, and Okakura, as Kadoi demonstrates, was at the forefront

of this 'ambiguous' situation. Okakura thus became one of the key initiators of the short-lived pan-Asian movement, in which he propounded the myth of 'One Asia', which can be linked to Western stereotypes of the Orient.[27] When Okakura sought to establish alternative artistic expressions, thus challenging Western and colonial aesthetics, he had already toured across Europe in desperate search of artistic originality. Contrary to his expectations, artistic circles in Europe in general, and fin de siècle Central Europe in particular, were steeped in Japonisme and thus left him disillusioned as to finding the origins of Western art. Kadoi thus positions his subsequent publication project, *The Ideals of the East*, at the crossroads of the crisis of representation that affected not only the West but also the East. Okakura's understanding of Western art, which included Central Europe, potentially opens up the region to the discourse and ideology of pan-Asianism.

Representational strategies and discourses are also at the heart of what concerns Tomáš Winter's article. He takes us back to the early 1910s, when the Group of Fine Artists (Skupina výtvarných umělců) in Prague organised a series of three exhibitions, each carefully curated by its members in an attempt to display their stylistic and formal concerns in response to avant-garde movements in France and Germany. In true avant-garde spirit, they experimented with different aesthetic expressions in order to challenge tradition and to make a central contribution to modernism as an aesthetic discourse. The group was composed of artists, architects, caricaturists, and historians, which is reflected in the character of the three exhibitions. The first exhibition in January 1912 framed the painters' works, which were formally oriented towards Cubist vocabulary, with a specially conceived exhibition architecture and an interior design that complemented the paintings with furniture and everyday objects. The second exhibition, which took place in autumn 1912, included artists from the group Die Brücke, as well as works by Othon Friesz and André Derain and a still life by Picasso. The architectural intervention again responded to the presented works of art and objects. Both exhibition projects are important initiatives and can serve as case studies in disconnecting the avant-garde discourse from its Western European linkage.[28] The exhibitions show that Prague avant-garde activities were not passive in their reception of artistic trends that originated in centres such as Paris. The group's active appropriation of avant-garde aesthetics, by accommodating them in their local cultural and ideological setting, was thus further explored in the conception of the third exhibition in spring 1913, which takes centre stage in Winter's article. In an act of pushing the practice of what a traditional exhibition framework offers, the members of the group chose not to show their own artworks. Instead, the exhibition brought together a range of Parisian avant-garde art, which was displayed next to Czech Gothic sculptures, folk art with reverse glass paintings, and nineteenth-century religion-themed carvings, as well as a series of ceramics. A further section showcased art and artefacts – textiles and sculptural objects – from across Asia, in addition to one sculpture from Africa and one from Columbia. While the Group of Fine Artists clearly intended to probe aesthetic cross-connections to different

cultural geographies and epochs, their approach also signals a desire to act as avant-garde from the periphery, to become part of what Piotrowski has referred to as 'horizontal history of the European avant-garde to deconstruct the relations between the centre and the margins in the world history of modern art'.[29] Winter therefore makes connections between the third Prague exhibition of the Group of Fine Artists and avant-garde manifestations in Russia and Budapest, as well as in Paris and Munich. The Prague artists had direct access to art from Asia and therefore the possibility to include a considerable number of artworks of Asian origin in their exhibition because of the many collections of Asian art in and around Prague. The Prague artists endeavour was to identify and appropriate the formal qualities of the tribal to Central European values instead of Parisian or German values.

COLLECTIONS, COLLECTORS, AND THEIR NETWORKS

While the contributors to this section discuss key collections of Asian art in Central Europe, they examine the way individual collectors built their networks in response to the cultural and political climate. The transregional connections that these individual networkers established flourished under the global condition of empires and the Cold War. The article by Markéta Hánová locates the origins of one of the most important museum collections of Asian art in the Czech Republic today – namely, the one at the NGP. The emergence of the collection coincides with the development of the first Czechoslovak Republic, where, following the young country's economic and industrial orientation towards East Asia, a couple of private collectors seized the opportunity to cultivate connections with East Asia and to organise sales exhibitions and auctions of mainly Japanese and Chinese art in both Prague and Berlin, with the intention of making a profit. Similar strategies are also discussed in the article by Johannes Wieninger, whose 'Networks of Enthusiasm for Japan' are explained in the same section. However, because of global economic crisis in the early 1930s the Czechoslovak Republic had limited national funds to make large aquisitions, which slowed the establishment of the desired collection of Asian art. As Hánová shows, Vincenc Kramář (1877–1969), art historian and director of the State Collection at the time, saw the need to create visual links between Asian art and the existing Old Masters collection in Prague to show, as he put it, a continuous development of world art. This allows a connection to be made with Kramář's general interest – namely, to create openness to art beyond national borders.[30] The close ties that were established with Japan during this time were further nurtured during the propaganda policies of the German Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia during the Second World War. The immediate post-war period saw the confiscation of property of German nationals and, after the communist regime came to power in 1948, that of the Czech aristocracy and entrepreneurs. In this period, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Art came to realise what previous initiatives had envisaged to

do – namely, the establishment of the Department of Oriental Art at the NGP in 1951, which is the Collection of Asian Art now. While this enabled the collective organisation of art objects of Asian origin in Czechoslovakia under the care of the NGP, it also allowed for further purchases from significant private collections. The activities of the Department of Oriental Art were closely connected to the Oriental Institute, which was moved from the Charles University to become part of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in 1952.[31] The institutional framework and the role that Czech oriental scholars played in overseeing the Department of Oriental Art at the NGP ensured that the activities were scholarly framed. The fact that Lubor Hájek, who became head of the collection, was an Indologist, confirms this. The *New Orient*, to which, following Soviet propaganda, the Czechoslovak government turned, prioritised China in the 1950s. Hánová therefore connects decolonisation efforts and the struggle of the peoples of Asia against the Western capitalist powers with the founding of the journal *Nový Orient*[32] and refers to the political changes and massive developments across Asia, which Czechoslovakia, as she puts it, views as a chance to engage with as the 'new Orient'. While new acquisitions were made, the centralisation of Asian art from all parts of the country was pursued under the care of the NGP and Hájek's leadership. At the same time, a series of national survey exhibitions, such as *Chinese Art* from 1955, were underway, demonstrating transregional connectedness, rearranged political alliances, and internationalism framed by Cold War cultural orientation and dependencies. The frequency of such exhibitions during the post-war era is usually ignored by accounts of studies of Asian survey exhibitions in Europe, which has led to an underrated view of the transregional cultural exchange among the 'brotherly' states of the socialist world.[33] Moreover, Hájek's curatorial efforts showed the will to establish connections between the art objects of the Asia collection, and during the multiple moves of the permanent exhibition to sometimes remote castles, he also succeeded in forming synergies with the prevailing local architectural conditions.

Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik's article on the Polish collector Feliks Jasieński is also about creating synergies between art, based on transregional spatial connections. Jasieński was at the forefront of exhibiting and establishing a comprehensive collection of Japanese art in Poland from as early as 1901, and he understood his task as a curator to convey all aspects of Japanese art to the Polish audience. This strategy not only involved well-staged, changing displays of Japanese art in Warsaw, Lwów (Lviv), and Kraków, but was accompanied by publications in which he emphasised the exemplary character of Japanese art for Polish art in its adherence to a national identity. Thus, the Polish collector saw in Japanese aesthetic qualities – such as colour, composition, and drawing – a model for Polish artists to learn to create art with a local character. In the absence of a sovereign nation state during the time of the three-part Partition of Poland, the production of a local art environment by way of participating in avant-garde discourses established in Paris and Moscow was thus a central concern.[34] Jasieński's

intention to work, from the outset, with original works of art from Asia and to create cross-connections with his preferred Polish contemporary artists allows for a link to be made with the representational strategy of the third exhibition of the Group of Fine Artists in Prague, which is at the heart of Tomáš Winter's article. The collection that Felix Jasieński finally donated to the National Museum in Kraków, as outlined by Kluczewska-Wójcik, was therefore intended to be shown within the framework of Polish and European art, thereby drawing connections between art from different parts of the world.

The networks that Johannes Wieninger focuses on were strategically transregional in nature, ensuring, in the case of his protagonists, the supply and distribution of Japanese art across Europe between the 1870s and the 1920s. Wieninger's essay also refers, as it were, to the euphoria of Europeans, or their *enthusiasm*, as the author aptly calls it, for faraway places and the resulting art movement of *Japonisme*, which had captivated Europe since the 1860s. It was, above all, Japanese woodblock prints that influenced Impressionism at the end of the nineteenth century and ensured, both formally and compositionally, art's breaking away from academism and its traditions.[35] The group of influential collectors of Japanese art that Wieninger thus introduces fuelled and supplied this enthusiasm for Japanese art in Europe. These individuals were distinguished by their well-developed networks, based on their expertise and connections between Europe and Japan, on the basis of which they built their collecting activities. They maintained relations throughout Europe and Japan, and to some extent in China, Siam, and India. By revisiting the networks that they established, Wieninger considers how the representation of Japan in Europe developed, especially in contrast to the two world fairs in London (1862) and Paris (1867) and the following world fair in Vienna (1873). The Vienna event was particularly successful in this respect, for it was here, after the establishment of the monarchy in Japan in 1868, that the Japanese government took it upon itself to successfully manage their self-representation. As a result, 'Japan pushed itself into the consciousness of the West',[36] and Wieninger thus introduces the activities of a group of individual collectors, whose transregional networks shaped museum collections in Vienna, Hamburg, Dresden, Leipzig, and Venice. In their position as diplomats, imperial officials, interpreters, and state or imperial-supported museum officials, these individuals took advantage of the opportunity that working within the framework of imperialist policy brought in order to establish their own collections and subsequent trading businesses. These often family-run enterprises also published illustrative sales and auction catalogues, thereby establishing themselves as experts in the field and their advice was frequently sought after. The interconnectedness between these individual collectors and experts also led to museum exhibitions at which art dealers, as we understand them today, acted as curators. This is how art dealers presented their private collections to an audience with purchasing power, from where the museum itself also made acquisitions. The demise of these networkers in the first two decades of the twentieth century coincided with a geographical

shift in collectors' activities, which increasingly turned to the mainland, where archaeological undertakings in China were on the rise, and with them art objects on the international markets. Wieninger concludes his text with a quotation from the Viennese art historian Ernst Diez, who assessed the Western collector's turn from Japan to China in the context of the art historical significance of East Asia. By referring to Japan as the Romans and to China as the Greeks of the East, Diez, whose speciality was Islamic art, applies the art discourse cultivated by Gottfried Semper and Carl Schnaase, for whom the Greek style was the standard of all forms of art.[37]

SPOTLIGHT ON (COMMUNIST) ASIA

The transregional connections developed, cultivated, and displayed through collecting activities and strategies in the interwar and post-war era are explored in more detail in the articles by Michaela Pejčochová, Uta Rahman-Steinert, and Iván Szántó. All three tie in with processes already mentioned in the previous articles – namely, the opening of the region of Central Europe through cultural networks that offered the opportunity to display connectedness with Asian countries through art. The three articles' focus on China and Western Asia, respectively, therefore allow for connections to be made with the preceding articles. Pejčochová picks up where Wieninger and Kluczewska-Wójcik leave off in their assessment that the enthusiasm for Japanese art was succeeded by an increased interest in art from China. Rahman-Steinert, on the other hand, connects with Hánová's observation that the 1950s emphasis – from a communist country's point of view – lay on establishing close connections with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Pejčochová sets out with a detailed analysis of the collecting activities of Vojtěch Chytil, his life and art-making in China, his teaching activities at the Beijing Academy of Arts, and, linked with this, his close ties with those artists that he most admired and collected. Not unlike the networkers that Wieninger introduced in his account, Chytil used the opportunity that his position of having first-hand access to East Asia gave him to organise sales exhibitions throughout Central Europe in the interwar period. Ultimately, the dynamics of his activities laid the foundation for the collection of modern Chinese ink paintings at the NGP, which was one of the largest of its kind in Europe and came into being in the 1950s and 1960s.[38] In her assessment, Pejčochová outlines the transregional and transcultural context of Chytil's project during the interwar period, but also points out that this projected a limited picture of the larger context of Chinese contemporary painting at the time. In stark contrast to these ventures guided by personal inclinations, Rahman-Steinert's focus on the East Asian Collection in Berlin is marked by state domination, political motivation, and control, a direction that equally characterises the Prague collection in the post-Chytil era. Both Pejčochová and Hánová refer to this in their texts.

The cultural 'gift', which is the main topic of Rahman-Steinert's article, implies friendship, and this, it turns out, is the framework for understanding the relationship between the PRC and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The author refers to the friendship treaty signed by the two countries in 1955, which was seen by the GDR as an opportunity to distance itself from the colonial past of imperial Germany. The declaration of friendship was symbolically accompanied by the return of items looted by German imperial troops in northern China during the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901), a fact that Rahman-Steinert picks up on to link it to the 'gift' which came as a surprise for the GDR for their ten-year anniversary celebration of the PRC at the Pergamonmuseum. What preceded this donation was the process and preparation for systematically setting up the permanent exhibition of Chinese art in East Berlin. The procedure is similar to that described by Hánová in her article on Prague: from sifting through provincial as well as private collections with the aim of presenting the best of Chinese art in the East German capital to drawing up lists with requests for permanent loans, which were sent to China. In East Berlin, on the other hand, the competition with West Berlin and its high-quality collection of Chinese art in the Museum Dahlem was seen as a benchmark to be measured against or, ideally, surpassed. To compete with the West while displaying friendship and solidarity with China's cultural achievements and greatness was a desire that was also taken seriously by the Chinese side. In what can be described as a transcultural undertaking, Chinese experts, accompanied by a German expert in the field, examined collections in the GDR so as to be able to assess the inventory situation. This is an interesting detail because it shows us that although the German side had precise ideas about what they wanted to show in the permanent China collection, the Chinese side ultimately decided what was sent to Germany. The Berlin collection of Chinese art is as unique as its counterpart in Prague. While both can be viewed within the framework of national preoccupation, here they are seen more as examples of cultural openness and a transregional orientation, which were made possible by the historic moment of globalisation through socialist rule and the Cold War. What the history of these collections also allows us to reflect on is the region's strategic positioning in global processes through connections which, when studied from a transregional perspective, can potentially lead to decentralising projects concerned with global history.[39]

The transregional orientation that marks Hungary's early communist era characterises Iván Szántó's article. His study aims to shed some light on the collecting and display of Islamic art in Hungary in the 1950s. Although economic, political, and cultural conditions – not to mention religious implications –, all seem to have been discouraging the promotion of these kinds of exhibitions, such events could still be realised during the first and most repressive decade of communist Hungary. This was partly a consequence of the recent flow of collections from private hands into public collections which made a relatively large amount of material suddenly available. At least as decisive, however, was the broad Cold War setting,

which in the 1950s unexpectedly revalued the previously marginalised areas of Islamic art and archaeology. Despite the narrow and haphazard range of Islamic objects, the official cultural policy was able through their display, without much effort, to simultaneously create a sense of cultural thaw for the domestic audience, and, for international observers, to express a willingness to reach out to the world beyond Europe: all of this in strict alignment with Soviet directives. The complex task required suitable professionals from both a scientific and a political point of view. Szántó provides an overview of these exhibitions and discusses the background of their creation.

SOUTH ASIA IN POST-WAR PRAGUE

Turning to South Asia, Zdenka Klimtová and Simone Wille examine the personal connections that developed between a group of Indologists from post-war Prague and modernist artists from post-partition India. Between the early 1950s and 1980s, these connections led to a series of exhibitions and to a collection of Indian modernist art in Prague, which has received little attention from scholars working on South Asian modernism or scholars working on projects globalising East Central Europe.[40] Zdenka Klimtová thus sheds light on these relationships from her position as curator of South Asian art at the NGP, and from her experience of having had first-hand contact with some of the Indian artists who had come to Prague at that time. Klimtová was also working with some of the protagonists who were instrumental in establishing the connections with South Asia and building the collection of Indian modernist art in Prague. This is how she elaborates on the activities of the founder of the collection of Asian art in the NGP, Lubor Hájek, thus complementing the report by Markéta Hánová, who referred above all to Hájek's commitment to collecting and exhibiting art from East Asia. Klimtová's detailed account of Hájek's activities to bring Indian art and artists to Czechoslovakia is characterised by his understanding of Indian languages and culture as an Indologist, but not least by his understanding of Asian art in general and his desire to present it to Czechoslovakia as part of the collection. From the large India exhibition held between 1955 and 1956, prepared by the Lalit Kala Academy to tour from Prague to East Central Europe, to several one-person exhibitions that took place mainly in and around Prague, the author makes connections with acquisitions and the displays of the collection of Asian art at various temporary locations, which are also mentioned in Hánová's article. In a 1969 fire, several of the Indian modernist artworks were destroyed at one such location, and all that remains are index cards, together with black-and-white photographs that document the loss. The study visits of Indian artists to Prague were another opportunity for the NGP to make acquisitions. The largest share in the collection is taken up by thirty-eight works on paper by the artist Chittaprosad Bhattacharya (1915–1978), which is also the largest collection of this artist's works in a public

museum. Several works by Indian artists from the NGP collection have been lent for past exhibitions in India, including works by Chittaprosad. Loan requests of this kind have also been recorded more recently and therefore continue to shape the transregional linkages between the two countries. The relationship between Indian artists and cultural networkers like Hájek in Prague is characterised by a high level of personal commitment that marked the Cold War period. The transregional nature of these friendships not only resulted in a unique collection but also seemed to have supported and accompanied these individuals' transitional phase, which marked this period globally.

The way the Nehruvian India of the 1950s selectively established connections with the newly organised post-war world in general and the socialist world in particular is also at the heart of Simone Wille's article, where she sheds light on the journeys of India's most celebrated modernist artist Maqbool Fida Husain (1915–2011) to Central Europe. Husain's frequent visits to Prague from as early as 1956 were related to friendships with a number of personalities, some of which Klimtová reports on in her contribution. The works that resulted from this – drawings, paintings, a performative work, and a film – are analysed in detail in Wille's article, thereby establishing an understanding for a consciousness of form or an artistic subjectivity that responded to movement and mobility, but also to the friendship and discourse that was located between East and West. The author begins with Husain's resistance to the Cold War cultural politics that he finds himself caught up in during the 1950s, and she references the way he overcomes the cultural bureaucracy through romance and friendship in Prague, which led to a personal engagement with the Czechoslovak culture and the city of Prague. The article draws from the latest research and recent publications to place Husain's Prague experience in a transcultural context. It opens up a new perspective on Indian modernism that has largely oriented itself around the figure of M. F. Husain and urges a fresh understanding of what has conventionally been referred to as 'internationalism' in Indian art. Husain's travels to Prague show once again how artists made transregional connections and thus actively engaged in the dynamics of global processes.

THE ARCHIVE: A REPOSITORY

Turning to the systematic archiving of East Asian art collections, Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik shares her experience and methodological approach in creating an online database that makes the transregional journeys of Asian artefacts and their respective Slovenian involvement (as a private collector or as an institution) widely accessible without any modern nation state border. With a large database of East Asian material from Slovenian museums and institutions, the VAZ website (https://vazcollections.si/) connects various objects of East Asian origin at the national level and makes them accessible to the general public for the first time.

Using virtual methods, this website breathes new life into a number of interesting and inspiring objects, as well as revealing their stories and the identities of their owners, who over the last two centuries either travelled to East Asia themselves or acquired these objects in some other way. Most of the objects of East Asian origin were left behind as legacies by various individuals who travelled to China or Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a result of the newly established diplomatic relationships between Austro-Hungary and East Asia. This opened the seas for an increasing number of Austro-Hungarian merchant and military ships, on board of which were also people from the Slovene ethnic territory.

COLLECTING ASIAN ART: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Collecting Asian Art: Cultural Politics and Transregional Networks in Twentieth-Century Central Europe concludes with a discussion between Simone Wille and Partha Mitter. This conversation connects with some issues that were raised during the course of the conference in Prague and published in the articles here. It looks at colonisation from a broader perspective by entering it via recent art historical discussions on the global aspects of modernism. It revisits the spatial and geographical school of thought and points to early proponents of the 'provincialism problem', such as Terry Smith, to connect with Piotr Piotrowski's powerful intervention in pointing to the exclusion of East Central Europe from mainstream modernist discussions through 'geo-history'. However, for Mitter, this does not resolve the prevalent imbalance between centre and periphery which he sees rooted in the long history of art. Mitter's quest to decolonise modernism thus considers a focused study of connections, networks, and transregional exchanges as one possibility to make changes. When we examine the collecting and exhibiting activities in East Central Europe and the extensive exchange between many Asian countries and the region, especially during the Cold War, we learn something about the esteem in which artists from Asia were held in Central European countries. Although these artists were often also represented in the West, they received far more attention in cities such as Prague, Warsaw, and Budapest. According to Mitter, it is thus pertinent to be open to methods and practices and to cooperate in tandem with scholars from different regions to work, collaboratively and collectively, towards decentring the canon.

Taking a transregional approach to collections of Asian art in Central Europe, the pages that follow open up multidirectional connections and unexpected engagements. The complex histories of globalities that these studies reveal indicate a desire to partake in processes in a global context.

NOTES

1. Among the relevant exhibition catalogues that have appeared over the past decade, see, for example, Karina H. Corrigan, Jan van Campen, and Femke Diercks, with Janet C. Blyberg (eds.), *Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2015); Cecilie Hollberg (ed.), *Textiles and Wealth in 14th Century Florence: Wool, Silk, Painting* (Florence: Gallerie dell'Accademia, 2018).
2. A conference dedicated to this topic was All the Beauty of the World: The Western Market for Non-European Artefacts (18th–20th Century), held in Berlin from 13 to 15 October 2016. Some of the conference papers from this conference were published in 'Asian Art: Markets, Provenance, History', *Journal for Art Market Studies* 2, no. 3 (2018). Thanks go to Michaela Pejčochová for drawing my attention to this conference.
3. See for example a recent exhibition, which looked at the Austro Czech explorer and collector Emil Holub and his Africa expeditions. Emil Holub, National Museum – Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague, exhibition catalogue, (Prague: National Museum, 2023).
4. Among the literature on personal encounters between protagonists from Europe and Asia on which collections of art were built, I would like to mention the historiographical study of the little-known movements of intellectuals and ideas, images and objects between late nineteenth-century Florence and Bombay by Filipa Lowndes Vicente, *Other Orientalisms: India between Florence and Bombay, 1860–1900* (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2012).
5. On the circulation of ideas, see Diana Sorensen, 'Editor's Introduction: Alternative Geographic Mappings for the Twenty-First Century', *Territories and Trajectories: Cultures in Circulation*, ed. Diana Sorensen (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2018), 13–31; Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 145, no. 5 (2002): 3–8.
6. For recent initiatives focused on Collecting Asian art in the Western world, see the symposiums held in Amsterdam in June 2018, https://culture360.asef.org/news-events/symposium-collecting-asian-art-in-the-western-world-the-netherlands/ (last visited 26 May 2022) and at the University at Delaware and Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library in October 2018, https://sites.udel.edu/globalaestheticasiaamerica/ (last visited 27 June 2022).
7. From a historical point of view, see Frank Hadler and Matthias Middell, 'Die Erforschung transnationaler Verflechtungen Ostmitteleuropas zwischen historiographischer Spurensicherung und Einbindung in das Konzept der *global condition* des späten 19. Jahrhunderts', in *Verflechtungen in Politik, Kultur und Wirtschaft im östlichen Europa: Transnationalität als Forschungsproblem*, ed. Jörg Hackmann and Peter Oliver Loew (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), 21–45; Peter Haslinger (ed.), 'Ostmitteleuropa transnational,' special issue, *Comparative* 18, no. 2 (2008): 7–10.
8. On the notion of 'transregional', see Matthias Middell, 'Transregional Studies: A New Approach to Global Processes', in *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, ed. Matthias Middell (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 1-16.
9. On the social effect of artefacts, see Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1991).
10. Cf. J. Elkins (ed.), *Is Art History Global?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg (eds.), *The Global Art World. Audiences, Markets, and Museums* (Osterfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008); Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (eds.), *Circulations in the Global History of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015); Monica Juneja, *Can Art History be Made Global? Meditations from the Periphery* (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2023).
11. One of the early publications on the 'global turn' in art history is J. H. Casid and A. D'Souza (eds.), *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn* (Williamstown, MA: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2014).
12. Cf. Monica Juneja, 'Alternative, Peripheral or Cosmopolitan? Modernism as a Global Process', in *'Global Art History' Transkulturelle Verortungen von Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft*, ed. Julia Allerstorfer and Monika Leisch-Kiesl (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 79–107. Premodern art historians tend to be viewed as too conservative to respond to the 'global turn', yet they also began to take a new approach to the study of premodern globality in the late 2010s; see, for example, B. C. Keene (ed.), *Toward a Global Middle Ages: Encountering the World through Illuminated Manuscripts* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2019).
13. Cf. Katja Castryck-Naumann (ed.), *Transregional Connections in the History of East Central Europe* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021); James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovksy, and Steffi Marung (eds.), *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Bloomington: Indiana University

Press, 2020); Steffi Marung, Uwe Müller, and Stefan Troebst, 'Monolith or Experiment? The Bloc as a Spatial Format', in *Spatial Formats under the Global Condition*, ed. Steffi Marung and Matthias Middell (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019), 275-309. For art historical based research and writing concerned with East and Central Europe and their transregional connectivity, cf. Beata Hock, 'Introduction' and 'Managing Trans/Nationality: Cultural Actors within Imperial Structures', in *Globalizing East European Art Histories – Past and Present*, ed. B. Hock and A. Allas (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 1–22, 39–52.

14. Cf. Piotr Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History', *Umění* LVI (2008): 378–383; Piotr Piotrowski, 'East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory', nonsite.org, no. 12 (2014), https://nonsite.org/east-european-art-peripheries-facing-post-colonial-theory/.
15. https://www.phil.muni.cz/journals/index.php/arteastcentral and https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/bitstream/handle/11222.digilib/143598/2_ArtEastCentral_1–2021–1_2.pdf?sequence=1, https://doi.org/10.5817/AEC2021–1-1
16. Concerning the Asia collection in Vienna's MAK (Museum of Applied Arts), see Johannes Wieninger, 'Die Asien-Sammlung im Österreichischen Museum für Kunst und Industrie und die Wiener Weltausstellung von 1873', in Roland Prügel (ed.), *Geburt der Massenkultur. Beiträge der Tagung des WGL-Forschungsprojekts 'Wege in die Moderne … ' im Germanischen Nationalmuseum* (Nuremberg: Verlag des germanischen nationalmuseums, 2014), 30–37; Johannes Wieninger, 'Sammlungsgeschichte – Die MAK-Sammlung Asien 1864–2014. The MAK Asia Collection 1864–2014', in *MAK/Gide Asian. China-Japan-Korea*, ed. Chistoph Thun-Hohenstein and Johannes Wieninger (Munich: 2014), 29–49. For a list of most of Johannes Wieninger's publications, visit https://www.wieninger.com/publikationen (last visited 26 May 2022).
17. See also *Asia through Art and Anthropology: Cultural Translation Across Borders*, ed. Fujubi Nakamura, Morgan Perkins and Olivier Krischer (London and New York; Bloomsbury, 2013).
18. While canonical art histories centred on a Western European and North American modernist canon still dominate initiatives to globalise art history, there is a steady increase in projects that prove otherwise. Important works include Kobena Mercer, 'Introduction', in *Cosmopolitan Modernism*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 2005), 6–23; Partha Mitter, 'Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery', *Art Bulletin* XC, no. 1 (December 2008): 531–574. See also the four responses to the latter article and the concluding reply by Mitter; Christian Kravagna, *Transmoderne: Eine Kunstgeschichte des Kontakts* (Berlin: b_books, 2017); Christian Kravagna, *Transmodern: An Art History of Contact: 1920–60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022); Monica Juneja, '"A Very Civil Idea …" Art History and World-Making – With and beyond the Nation', *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, ed. Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, and Diamantis Panagiotopoulos (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 293–316.
19. See Bénédicte Savoy, Charlotte Guichard, and Christine Howald (eds.), *Acquiring Cultures: Histories of World Art on Western Markets* (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2018).
20. Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 387–426.
21. Josef Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom? Beiträge zur Geschichte der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Kunst* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1901).
22. Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 400.
23. For more information on the conference, see https://www.ngprague.cz/en/event/3092/collecting-asian-art-in-prague-conference (last accessed 10 January 2023).
24. *Patterns of Transregional Trails. The Materiality of Artworks and Their Place in the Modern Era. Bombay, Paris, Prague, Lahore, ca. 1920s to early 1950s* (P29536-G26), funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), 2016–2021.
25. *Persian Art in Vienna, 1900–1945: The Shifting of Objects, Images and Ideas in Central Europe* (M 2428-G25), funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), 2019–2022. See two of her previous research outcomes concerning the role of Central Europe in the formation of non-European art collections during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Yuka Kadoi and Iván Szántó (eds.), *The Shaping of Persian Art: Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013); Iván Szántó and Yuka Kadoi (eds.), *The Reshaping of Persian Art: Art Histories of Islamic Iran and Beyond* (Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2019).
26. See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Holding the World in Balance: The Connected Histories of the Iberian Overseas Empires, 1500 – 1640', *American Historical Review* 112, no. 5 (December 2007): 1359–1385.
27. See Partha Mitter, 'Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin in Calcutta: The Creation of a Regional Asian Avant-garde Art', in *Arrival Cities: Migrating Artists and New Metropolitan Topographies in the*

20th Century, ed. Burcu Dogramaci, Mareike Hetschold, Laura Karp Lugo, Rachel Lee, and Helene Roth (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), 150.

28. See Per Bäckström and Benedikt Hjartarson (eds.), *Decentering the Avant-Garde* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2014).
29. Piotr Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde', in *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, ed. Sascha Bru, Jan Baetens, Benedikt Hjartarson, Peter Nicholls, Tania Ørum, and Hubert van den Berg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 49–58. A recent discussion about Piotrowski's theories and this text in particular has led to a special issue of *Umění: Journal of The Institute of Art History* 69, no. 2 (2021), edited by Steven Mansbach. See also the review of this special issue by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'The Place of Modernism in Central European Art', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 26 (June 2022), https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2022/03/murawska-muthesius-rev.pdf
30. Vincenc Kramář, *Kubismus* (Brno: 1920); see also Matthew Rampley, 'Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies', *Umění Art* 2, LXIX (2021): 157.
31. The Oriental Institute was founded in 1922 but started to operate in 1929, when a suitable venue was found.
32. The journal *Nový Orient* was established in 1945 by the Oriental Institute, and starting in 1961, it was supplemented with the English-language version *New Orient Bimonthly*, which was published until 1971.
33. For some recent research devoted to these lesser-noticed globalisation routes, see the international conference *The Global GDR. A Transcultural History of Art (1949–1990)*, TU Dresden & Albertinum, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, 9–11 July 2022; Simone Wille, *South Asia in Central Europe: The Mobility of Artists and Art Works between 1947 and 1989*, Austrian Science Fund FWF (V880-G), University of Innsbruck; Marcus Kenzler, '"Sozialismus war für mich auch Glaubenssache", Über die Darstellung Lateinamerikas und die Verwendung christlicher Symbolik in der Kunst der DDR', in *Doing Culture under State-socialism: Actors, Events, and Interconnections*, ed. Beáta Hock (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2015), 4, 24, 68–83.
34. Cf. Timothy O. Benson, 'Introduction', *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910 – 1930* (Cambridge, MA, and Los Angeles: MIT and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002), 12–22 (exh. cat.).
35. Johannes Wieninger, 'Gedanken zum Japonismus', in *Schiffbrüche und Idylle: Mensch, Natur und die vergängliche, fliessende Welt* (*Ukiyo-e*) *in Ost und West. Das Symposium*, ed. Hans-Günther Schwarz, Geraldine Gutiérrez de Wienken, and Frieder Hepp (Munich: ludicium, 2014), 260.
36. Johannes Wieninger, 'Networks of Enthusiasm for Japan', in this volume, p. 97.
37. Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten oder praktische Ästhetik: ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde* (*Band 1*): *Die textile Kunst für sich betrachtet und in Beziehung zur Baukunst* (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1860), https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.1299; Karl Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste im Mittelalter*, vol. I, *Altchristliche, byzantinische, muhammedanische, karolingische Kunst* (Düsseldorf: 2nd ed., 1869).
38. Cf. Michaela Pejčochová, 'The Formation of the Collection of 20th Century Chinese Painting in the National Gallery in Prague – Friendly Relations with Faraway China in the 1950s and Early 1960s', *Arts Asiatiques* 67 (2012): 97–106, https://doi.org/10.3406/arasi.2012.1779.
39. Katja Castryck-Naumann (ed.), *Transregional Connections in the History of East Central Europe*, 7.
40. Scholarship on modernist art from South Asia has selectively identified South Asian artists' connections to Central European locations, without serious research, however. Cf. Sanjukta Sunderason, *Partisan Aesthetics: Modern Art and India's Long Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), 199; Sonal Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations: Artistic Practice, National Identity, and Modernism in India, 1930–1990* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 26; Iftikhar Dadi, *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 122. For in-depth studies on some of these connections, see the following publications by Simone Wille: *Modern Art in Pakistan: History, Tradition, Place* (New Delhi and London: Routledge, 2015), 21–39; 'A Transnational Socialist Solidarity: Chittaprosad's Prague Connection', *Stedelijk Studies*, no. 9 (autumn 2019): n.p.; 'The Lidice Collection of Postwar Modernist Art: An Art History Informed by Engagement and Circulation', in *Come Closer: The Biennale Reader*, ed. Vít Havránek and Tereza Stejskalová (Prague: tranzit and Sternberg Press, 2020), 51–72; 'Chittaprosad's Linocut Prints at the National Gallery in Prague: Understanding Indo-Czech Cultural Relations in the Postwar Era', *Bulletin of the National Gallery in Prague* XXX (2020): 6–21; and her chapter in the present volume.

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THE LOCATION OF ASIAN ART IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY CENTRAL EUROPE

THE IDEALS OF THE EAST: ASIAN ART AND THE CRISIS OF VISUAL EXPRESSION ACROSS THE GLOBE, CA. 1900*

Yuka Kadoi

Among the influential art historical texts datable to the early twentieth century, *The Ideals of the East: With Special Reference to the Art of Japan*, written by the Japanese scholar Kakuzo Okakura (also known as Okakura Tenshin; 1863–1913), is often acclaimed not only as a milestone in his intellectual life but also as one of the most influential publications that served to define what was later called 'Asian art'.[1] Released on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War and written in English, it left a long-lasting legacy after its publication by the London-based publisher John Murray in 1903. Although this influential book has been the subject of investigation from a perspective of pan-Asianism due to its significant cultural impact on British colonies in Asia, particularly with regard to the author's sojourn in the Indian subcontinent and his interaction with South Asian intellectuals, notably with Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), there remains much to be said on this master narrative within a wide spectrum of art histories beyond the Indo-Pacific cultural axis.[2] This chapter, thus, casts a fresh eye on *The Ideals of the East* as the crisis point in representation across the globe around the turn of the twentieth century by underscoring Okakura's journey to Europe via the United States in the late 1880s. Furthermore, it considers the collecting of Asian art from the perspective of individual encounters and cultural networks, rather than dealing with the art collection as one single entity.

To understand the historiographical background of Okakura's transcendental output, it is worth looking at one of the world maps made in Meiji Japan as the mental map of the rapidly modernised insular country on the fringe of the Pacific Ocean (fig. 1). Entitled 'Bankoku Zenzu' (literally, 'Universal Map'), this map clearly demonstrates how Japan – just a few decades after the adoption and adaptation of Western technologies and ideologies as a result of the Meiji Restoration in 1868 – was able to execute the map in a visibly Western style, in particular how to locate this tiny island country in the centre of the world.[3] Moreover, this

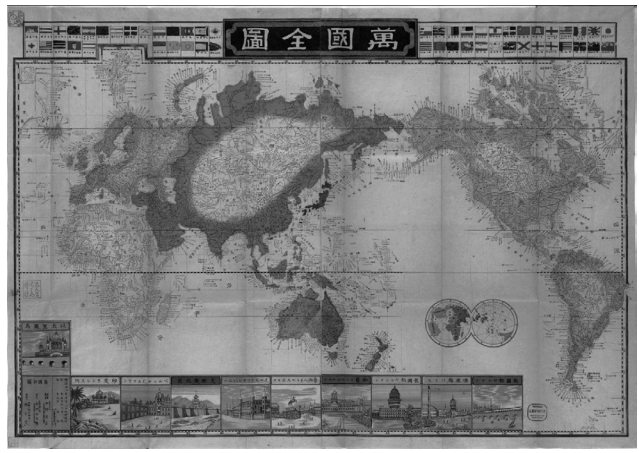

Figure 1. Sentaro Yoshimura: Bankoku zenzu. Meiji 21 (1888), 43 × 70 cm. East Asian Library, UC Berkeley (A47). (See plate 1, p. 241)

map projects not only the idea of centricity but also the binary concept of East and West, an Orientalist notion of its own superiority over others: accordingly, the 'East' in the context of modern Japan came to be perceived not as the direction towards the point of the horizon where the sun would rise but as an imaginative geography with particular cultural traits, designated in a light red colour, next to Japan in the centre, differentiated by its dark red colour; the 'East' is hereby sandwiched between two 'Western' geographical terrains in the northern hemisphere – namely, Europe in green and North America in purple.

Before the nineteenth century, people in this insular country did not think of themselves as belonging to something called Japanese or Asians or by locating themselves between East and West according to their own cultural norms. The fact is that the country was not only geographically isolated but also officially closed to the rest of the world for more than two hundred years, from the 1630s to 1853 – a period known as *Sakoku* (literally, 'secluded nation') – apart from extremely limited overseas contacts through select foreign traders.[4] It is true that this long-term closure made it possible not only to preserve the country's traditions but also to develop its own unique paradigm to engage other cultures when many European nations expanded their colonial influence across Asia.[5] But once the perception of the other was introduced from the West, this culture-centrism concept quickly began to reshape Japan's civilisational identity in a paradoxical way, neither Eastern nor Western, nor between Eastern and Western but, rather ambiguously, both Eastern and Western at the same time.

Under such complex cultural-ideological circumstances, the author of *The Ideas of the East* (fig. 2) grew up and became one of the major transcultural personalities in modern Japan.[6] Born in Yokohama on the eve of the Meiji Restoration, Okakura had a typical Meiji elite upbringing. By studying classical Chinese and English to get the gist of cosmopolitanism in his youth, he went on to master English as his language of critical thinking. Having entered Tokyo Imperial University, the young

Figure 2. Kakuzo Okakura in kimono, Boston, 1904. Photographer unknown. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA. (See plate 2, p. 242)

aspiring student became an assistant to Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908), one of the pioneering, if not controversial, American historians of Japanese art.[7] After his journey to the West in the mid-1880s, Okakura returned to Japan to get involved with the preservation of traditional Japanese art at Tokyo University of the Arts. He travelled across the Asian continent during the last decade of the nineteenth century to find out the Eastern roots of Japanese art and culture, Buddhism in particular. Following the appearance of *The Ideas of the East*, Okakura was invited by William Sturgis Bigelow (1850–1926), an American collector of Japanese art, to join the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1904, and Okakura later became the head of the Asian art department. This position was later succeeded by the Sri Lanka-born historian and philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947).[8]

Okakura's mentor, Fenollosa, is known to have been one of the principal advocates of the preservation of traditional Japanese art. However, he has also been fiercely criticised, not only having had a certain neo-Buddhist stance on Japanese culture but also having smuggled treasures from Japan into the United States on the grounds that traditional arts and crafts, which had been neglected in the nation's drive towards industrialisation and modernisation, would need to be protected so as to combat total destruction.[9] During the late nineteenth century, Japan underwent a drastic religio-cultural shift, called *Haibutsu Kishaku* (literally, 'abolish Buddhism and destroy Shakyamuni'), whereby the nationwide prosecution of Buddhism was initiated, followed by the destruction of Buddhist temples, images, and texts.[10] While this iconoclasm was initially intended to secularise Buddhist institutions that had been dominating Japanese society for centuries, this served to reformulate Shinto, then a largely forgotten indigenous animistic and shamanistic belief, to be elevated as a national religion of the country.[11] Shinto was considered suitable for the ideological shift of Meiji Japan, since Buddhism was ultimately an import from India via China, but Shinto, literally meaning 'the way of God', would look more monotheistic and in many ways appear to be more Western than Eastern.

An interesting parallel can be drawn between Japan and some Middle Eastern countries, particularly Turkey and Iran, in terms of artistic modernisation. As in the case with Japan's rediscovery of *Ukiyo-e* and Buddhist art, Middle Eastern countries rediscovered their rich cultural heritage through Euro-American assessments but at the same time struggled to create something original and creative. While pursuing experimental modes of representation, they often responded

to modernity through cultural self-reflection, either by copying Western models or by borrowing elements coming from their own non-Western and Western sources to produce derivative works of art.[12] The former is, for instance, echoed in artworks of the late Ottoman painter Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910), whose self-Orientalising painting continues to provoke academic and commercial interests alike,[13] and the late Qajar court painter Mohammad Ghaffari (1848–1940), a.k.a. 'Kamal-ol-Molk', who cultivated his pictorial skills by copying works of some well-known Old Masters' paintings during his stay in Europe (1898–1902).[14] In other words, if the names of the painters are not visible on the first glance, these paintings could be attributed to the likes of Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904) and Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669), respectively.[15] Furthermore, modern Middle Eastern countries – such as Turkey, Iran, and other newly independent countries in Asia – imitated Japan's cultural policy to form an alliance for non-Western modernisation and anti-Westernisation.[16]

In this context, one may wonder to what extent a history of Middle Eastern art could be connected with that of Asian art. This is an ongoing historiographical debate. To make a long story short, Middle Eastern art is generally viewed to be more closely associated with the history of European art, thanks to the Middle East's shared classical heritage across the Mediterranean region as well as ramifications of the nineteenth-century Orientalist manoeuvre.[17] Within non-Western fields of art historical research, the overreaching division between Asian art and Middle Eastern art was unfortunately underlined during the early twentieth century, although it is our current twenty-first-century duty to incorporate Middle Eastern art into a more inclusive, wider art historical horizon of Asian art.

JOURNEYS THROUGH THE WEST

Without doubt, Okakura's stay in India was one of the decisive factors that stirred him to make a manifesto on Asian art. A key to understanding Okakura's initial impulse to write *The Ideals of the East* is, however, his visit to the West in the mid-1880s.

In autumn 1886 Okakura and Fenollosa set off a journey to the United States, first arriving in San Francisco and then moving on to the East Coast.[18] While conducting fieldwork in Boston, New York, and Washington, DC, Okakura came to understand two essential aspects of American art at that time, both of which lacked originality and creativity. First, Okakura confirmed that American visual culture was entrenched in medievalism, a cycle of reception inspired by the European models of the Middle Ages: for instance, the first building of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, established in 1870, where he would find himself as the head of the Asian art department around 1904, was designed as the typical Gothic Revival style.[19] Second, he must have experienced the growing fashionability of Japanese art in late nineteenth-century America, namely Japonisme, with mixed emotions.[20] The

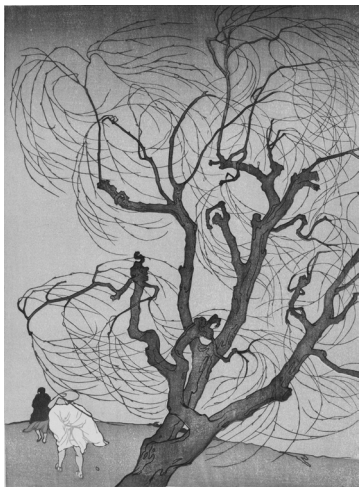

Figure 3. *A Gust of Wind* by Emil Orlik. 1901. National Gallery in Prague. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See plate 3, p. 243)

rise of Japonisme in American art was largely linked to the growth of the Arts and Crafts movement of the 1880s and up to around 1910, when, ironically, Japan was downgrading its own traditional arts and crafts in favour of Western-style representational modes of production. Having been unimpressed with Gothic Revivalism and Japonisme in America, Okakura headed to the Old World, hoping to find the real origin of Western art.

In early 1887 Okakura and Fenollosa sailed to Europe from the United Sates and visited some of the major European cultural capitals at that time. Among the key locations that gave Okakura lasting impressions, Lyon was noteworthy, given that the city made him question the competitiveness of textile industries in Japan. After passing through Zurich, he continued his journey eastwards to Central Europe via Tyrol and arrived in Vienna later in the same year.

Although Okakura's visit to Vienna did not coincide with any major events, he must have sensed that Japan was already part of the cultural fabric of the imperial capital and its vicinity, some fifteen years after the Vienna world fair of 1873, the first international exposition officially participated in by the Meiji government.[21] The Vienna fair was particularly important in the historicisation process of Japanese art, where the concept of art (*bijutsu*; literally, 'act pertaining beauty') was introduced in conformity with the Western canon in fine art.[22] The definition of *bijutsu* was further articulated by Fenollosa in his 1882 lecture known today as 'Bijutsu Shinsetsu' ('The True Meaning of Fine Art'), which stressed its meaning as equivalent to 'fine art' in the West, indicating that an 'object of aesthetic appreciation' (*bijutsu*), such as painting and sculpture, should be distinguished from traditional crafts (*geijutsu*; literally 'act pertaining technical skills').[23]

By the time of Okakura's stay in Vienna, European artists had already started seeking alternative modes of representation, in opposition to the strict academic disciplines. Although any non-Western visual culture could have offered them sources of inspiration, it was Japonisme that served to transform European art towards experimental modernity. In addition to Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), the Austrian champion of this aesthetic movement, the craze for Japan was also strongly felt across the wider circle of Central European artists and architects.[24] The Prague native artist Emil Orlik (1870–1932), for instance, is known to have developed a distinctive pictorial style under the strong inspiration of Japanese prints (fig. 3).[25] Yet these were not what Okakura expected to encounter in Europe.

Instead of the genesis of Western art, he confronted European copies of Japanese art and once again began to question if anything original or creative ever existed in Western art.

Although Okakura was disappointed with the visual culture of fin de siècle Central Europe, an important encounter in Vienna changed his mindset. Through his Japanese contacts in Vienna, he was able to meet Lorenz von Stein (1815–1890), a German scholar of public administration and professor at the University of Vienna who was advising the Meiji government for establishing a codified constitution.[26] At the age of seventy-two, Stein kept his dignity when meeting Okakura, then in his mid-twenties. Instead of feeling intimidated in front of the senior academic, Okakura boosted his self-confidence to be able to participate in an intellectual debate equally with Stein. This experience may have encouraged him to position himself as an international expert of art and culture and began to feel entitled to speak for the East, or even for both the East and the West.

Having been unable to obtain a satisfactory answer for the origin of Western art with his stopover in Vienna, Okakura moved to Florence – the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance – hoping to find a credible explanation for his seemingly unanswerable query. Italy at that time was not particularly creative in terms of visual culture, however; because the country was going through a great deal of socio-economic changes as a result of the unification of different states (*Risorgimento*; 1848–1871), Italian art of the late nineteenth century can be at best described as the transitional period between neo-Classicism and neo-Impressionism or called Divisionism (ca. 1890–1907), while the Renaissance legacy suffered from neglect.[27] The last major destination on Okakura's European tour, Paris, was the greatest disappointment for him. Japonisme was one of France's most enduring aesthetic movements and radically transformed visual culture in Paris,[28] yet once again, this was not what Okakura wished to see in Paris. It was time for him to return to the East to search for a source of originality.

ORIGINALITY AND DERIVATIVENESS

Against the backdrop of his frustration with the visual culture of the Euro-American world in the late nineteenth century, *The Ideals of the East* can be considered as Okakura's provocation, to demonstrate his ability to think critically and to write flamboyantly as equals in the Anglophone publishing sphere. This book was by no means translated from Japanese to English by a native Anglophone speaker. As stressed in a preface, it was originally written in English, so it was directed at English-speaking audiences from the outset.[29] It was only in the late 1930s, twenty-five years after Okakura's death, that the original English version was translated into Japanese, when the country was drifting in uncharted waters of military conflicts, with the result that the Pacific War broke out in late 1941.[30] Evoking the Victorian book design (fig. 4), *The Ideals of the East* could have been

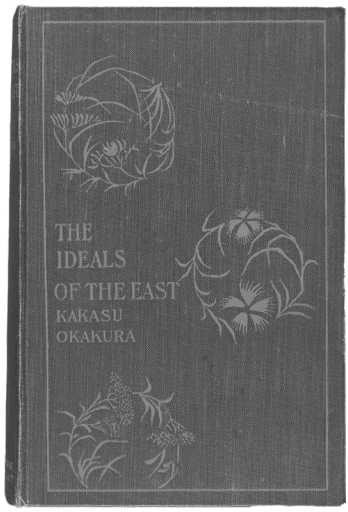

Figure 4. *The Ideals of the East: with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* by Kakasu [sic] Okakura. First edition. London: John Murray, 1903. (See plate 4, p. 244)

a perfect English-looking book, if there had been no typo in the name of the author. This misspelled name, Kakasu Okakura, was also used by *The New York Times* when celebrating the book's publication.[31] Victorian literary flavours permeate the contents of the book, in particular a panegyrical introductory text provided by Margaret Nobel (also known as Sister Nivedita Ramakrishna-Vivekananada; 1867–1911), an Irish nun who was in close contact with Okakura.[32] While comparing Okakura with the English arts and crafts conservationist William Morris (1834–1896), she emphasised a high degree of commonality among Japan, China, and India, along the lines of transnational wisdom and spirituality with shared Eastern roots: 'it is of supreme value to show Asia, as Mr. Okakura does, not as the congeries of geographical fragments that we imagined, but as a united living organism, the whole breathing a single complex life'.[33] This universalist narrative was followed by yet another panegyric on her guru Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), the Bengali Hindu philosopher and reformist who propagated religious universalism.[34]

The main contents of *The Ideals of the East* was structured to narrate an ethno-national art history of Japan, albeit no illustrations, incorporating Asian values to support the most crucial part of Okakura's argument, namely the genesis of Japanese art. Following the chapter on 'primitive art', the early historical period was largely divided according to a set of Eastern systems of moral, social, and religious teachings and geochronological orders – Confucianism from northern China, Daoism from southern China, and Buddhism from India – to establish a genealogical link between Japan and the Asian continent, as well as a threshold to divide a history of Japanese art by the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century, hence the beginning of the Asuka era (550–700 CE) as the first Buddhist period.[35] Starting with the powerful slogan 'Asia is One' and ending with the glorification of Asia against the overwhelming tendency of modernisation as a malicious import from Western materialism, *The Ideals of the East* demonstrates how at the time of publication the Japanese cultural theorist gained the credibility to speak as an authority about both Eastern and Western art. His dualistic approach, in turn, served to enhance the uniqueness of Japanese-style rational thinking.

To what extent was *The Ideals of the East* original? Although this book appears to show his ability to engage a more complex understanding of ideas in his non-native language, Okakura was by no means introducing his trailblazing

concept of the East. It was neither the intellectual oeuvre to manifest his ambition to shape a new field of research nor the ideological tool to attack Western hegemony on behalf of the East: *The Ideals of the East* should be recontextualised as proof of his dependence on copying ideas derived from Western models and, in turn, replicating knowledge about the world in a way that made sense to the West but not necessarily to the East. One of the derivative elements coming from the Western canon of art history is the periodisation process of Japanese art, particularly the overemphasis on Buddhism to divide a history into two separate phases of religionisation, as Christianity set the standards for the formation of European art. This quasi-historical partition reminds us of other cases in the field of non-European art histories, such as Middle Eastern and South Asian arts, to be dichotomised by the introduction of Islam and the subsequent formation of Muslim-ruling dynasties as canonical subdivisions.[36] Seeking originality, Okakura is likely to have failed to ask himself how Western his engagement was with regard to the question of the East. If Coomaraswamy maligned Indian art, Okakura could have also to some extent participated in the maligning of Japanese art.[37]

The early twentieth century was a time of division, both physically and psychologically, when various dichotomous ideas were reconceptualised – ranging from *Orient oder Rome* to East and West, as well as, to a certain extent, positive-sounding counterparts pertaining to cultural connectivity, for instance the Silk Road.[38] Among the problematics concerning stereotyping, there is no doubt that dichotomisation would provide a simplified, misleading, and distorting view of other cultures. Yet one should also argue that, if the idea of the East was created by the West, the idea of the West as the model of individualism was articulated as a result of non-Western modernity.[39] In this aspect, the following extract from Okakura's lecture, entitled 'Modern Problems in Painting', at the International Exhibition held in 1904 in St. Louis, is worthy of citation:

> I do not mean to say that Japan should not study the Western methods, for thereby she may add to her own method of expression. Nor do I desire that Japan should not assimilate the wealth of ideas which the Western civilization has amassed. On the contrary, the mental equipment of Japanese painting needs a strengthening through the accretion of the world's ideals. We can only become more human by becoming universal. What I wish to protest against is the attitude of imitation which is so destructive of individuality.[40]

To conclude a journey into Okakura's ideals of the East, it would be worthwhile to gaze upon one of the early twentieth-century Japanese paintings contemporary to *The Ideals of the East*, *Two Dragons Competing for the Jewel* (fig. 5), and question to what extent this painting is in essence Eastern, Western, traditional, modern, original, or derivative. This painting was a favourite of Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840–1924), and it was initially acquired by Okakura himself.[41] It turned out that

Figure 5. *Two Dragons Competing for the Jewel* by Taikan Yokoyama. 1904. Colour on silk, 51.2 × 76 cm. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA (C45). (See plate 5, p. 245)

this was a work by Taikan Yokoyama (1868–1958), a protégé of Okakura and the founder of *Nihonga* (literally, 'Japanese painting'), Easternised Japanese painting with a tendency towards abstraction, as a counterpart to *Yoga* (literally, 'overseas painting'), Westernised Japanese painting with a tendency towards realism.[42] While the birth of neo-Eastern visual culture has often been contextualised within the rise of Japan's national cultural politics,[43] many *Nihonga* paintings capture the concept of *The Ideals of the East*, one of the master narratives of Asian art from the viewpoint of representational crises in the early twentieth century. In revisiting historical entanglements of Eastern spirituality, Yokoyama's *Two Dragons Competing for the Jewel* can be viewed as a manifestation of the ambiguity of Japan's view towards itself and its position in the rapidly globalising world, as exemplified in the levitating jewel as a metaphor for the land of the Rising Sun between two tree branches terminating with dragon heads as analogies of West and East in confrontation.

NOTES

* The completion of this study was made possible thanks to the Lise Meitner Programme, Austrian Science Fund (FWF) (M2428-G25).

1. Kakasu [sic] Okakura, *The Ideals of the East: With Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (London: John Murray, 1903).
2. See Brij Tankha (ed.), *Okakura Tenshin and Pan-Asianism: Shadows of the Past* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). Among the recent studies dealing with Okakura and Tagore, see Partha Mitter, 'Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin in Calcutta: The Creation of a Regional Asian Avant-garde Art', in *Arrival Cities: Migrating Artists and New Metropolitan Topographies in the 20th Century*, ed. Burcu Dogramaci, Mareike Hetschold, Laura Karp Lugo, Rachel Lee, and Helene Roth (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), 147–158.
3. The production of this type of Japanese world map can be traced to the early seventeenth century. On the early modern Japanese world map (Bankoku shozu), see Elke Papelitzky, 'A Description and Analysis of the Japanese World Map Bankoku Sozu in Its Version of 1671 and Some Thoughts on the Sources of the Original Bankoku Sozu', *Journal of Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 15–59. For further information about the cartography of Japan, see Kazutaka Unno, 'Cartography in Japan', in *The History of Cartography, Volume 2, Book 2. Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, ed. B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 346–477.

4. For the study on Sakoku from historical and contemporary perspectives, see Mayumi Itoh, *Globalization of Japan: Japanese Sakoku Mentality and U.S. Efforts to Open Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
5. For a recent study of Japanese encounters with other cultures before 1850, see Ronald P. Toby, *Engaging the Other: 'Japan' and Its Alter-Egos, 1550–1850* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).
6. Among several studies concerning Okakura's biography and his legacies, see Noriko Murai and Yukio Lippit (eds.), 'Beyond Tenshin: Okakura Kakuzo's Multiple Legacies', special issue, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 24 (2012). His biographical data come from the following publications: Yasuko Horioka, *The Life of Kakuzo: Author of The Book of Tea* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1963). For in-depth discussion on his transcultural traits, see Yuka Kadoi, 'Embracing Islam: Okakura Tenshin at the Limits of His Alternative Orientalism', *Journal of Transcultural Studies* 13, nos. 1-2 (2022): 56-75.
7. Much has been said about their joint venture into the construction of Japanese aesthetic narratives. For recent studies, see Arthur Mitteau, 'L'universalisme de l'esthétique chez Okakura Kakuzo (dit Tenshin) et Ernest Fenollosa: critique et actualité', *Ebisu: Études japonaises* 50 (2013): 95–133.
8. For critical reassessments on Coomaraswamy, see Partha Mitter's classic study *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 277–286. See also a recent study on Coomaraswamy and Japan: Shigemi Inaga, 'A.K. Coomaraswamy and Japan: A Tentative Overview', in *Culture as Power: Buddhist Heritage and the Indo-Japanese Dialogue*, ed. Madhu Bhalla (London: Routledge, 2020), 109–131.
9. For further discussion on Fenollosa and his history of Asian art, see David Carrier, *Museum Skepticism: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries* (New York: Duke University Press, 2006), Chapter 7 ('Ernest Fenollosa's History of Asian Art'), 126–145.
10. For further discussion, see Martin Collcutt, 'Buddhism: The Threat of Eradication', in *Japan in Transition: From Tokugawa to Meiji*, ed. Marius B. Jansen and Gilbert Rozman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 143–167; James Edward Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).
11. For the reshaping process of Shinto as the national religion of Japan, see Jason Ānanda Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
12. See Wijdan Ali's *Modern Islamic Art: Development and Continuity* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997), one of the pioneering studies in the field that would later be renamed 'modern Middle Eastern art'. Although it was written from a viewpoint of connecting premodern and modern 'Islamic art' histories, Ali's book set a benchmark for subsequent attempts to define the question of modernity in Middle Eastern visual culture. Please note that at that time, the term 'Islamic art' was used in a generic sense, implying the art, architecture, and material culture of the Middle East and North Africa after the seventh century.
13. Among several studies concerning Osman Hamdi Bey, see Edhem Eldem, 'Making Sense of Osman Hamdi Bey and His Paintings', *Muqarnas* 29 (2012): 339–383.
14. On Kamal-ol-molk, see Layla S. Diba, 'Muhammad Ghaffari: The Persian Painter of Modern Life', *Iranian Studies* 45, no. 5 (2012): 645–659.
15. Cf. Hamdi Bey's Orientalist-style painting *Koranic Instruction* (1890), for instance, has recently fetched over 4 million British pounds at Sotheby's in London during the October Islamic Week in 2019 (https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2019/important-works-from-the-najd-collection/osman-hamdy-bey-koranic-instruction, accessed 8 July 2021); Kamal-ol-Molk's copy of Rembrandt's self-portrait (1897) is now in the collection of the Iranian Parliament (http://archive.ical.ir/files/museum/collections/paint/kamal/Picture%20342, accessed 21 July 2021).
16. See Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World-Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
17. See Avinoam Shalem, 'What Do We Mean When We Say "Islamic Art"? A Plea for a Critical Rewriting of the History of the Arts of Islam', *Journal of Art Historiography* 6 (2012): 1–18.
18. Information on Okakura's journey to the United State and Europe comes from the following publications: Horioka, *The Life of Kakuzo*; Emiko Arai, *Okakura Tenshin Monogatari* (Kanagawa: Kanagawa Shimbun, 2004).
19. A photograph of the original building is available at https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2016799436/, accessed 22 December 2021. For further discussion on American medievalism, see Jan M. Ziolkowski, *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity: Volume 3: The American Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018).
20. On Japonisme in American art, see Julia Meech and Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America: The Japanese Impact on the Graphic Arts 1876–1925* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1990).
21. For an overview of Japan's participation in world fairs, see Ellen P. Conant, 'Refractions of the Rising Sun: Japan's Participation in International Exhibitions, 1862–1910', in *Japan and Britain: An Aesthetic Dialogue, 1850–1930*, ed. Tomoko Sato and Toshio Watanabe (London: Lund Humphries, 1991), 79–92.
22. Michael Marra, *Essays on Japan: Between Aesthetics and Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 45–46.

23. Marra, *Essays on Japan*, 46.
24. See Verena Traeger, 'Gustav Klimts ethnografische Sammlung: Chinamode, Japonismus und das Aschanti-Fieber in Wien um 1900 / Gustav Klimt's Ethnographic Collection: Chinese Fashion, Japonism and the Ashanti Craze in Vienna around 1900', in Hans-Peter Wipplinger and Sandra Tretter (eds.), *Gustav Klimt: Jahrhundertkünstler / Gustav Klimt: Artist of the Century*, ed. Hans-Peter Wipplinger and Sandra Tretter (Vienna: Leopold Museum, 2018), 137–165. For further information on Japonisme in Vienna, see Johannes Wieninger, *Verborgene Impressionen: Japonismus in Wien, 1870–1930* (Vienna: Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, 1990). See also several exhibitions of Japonisme in Budapest to celebrate the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the year of 2020, such as *The Call of the East. Japonisme as Reflected in the Prints of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, and the *Japonisme in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy* at the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts.
25. For further discussion, see Markéta Hánová, 'Emil Orlik: From Japan', *Journal of Japonisme* 3, no. 1 (2018): 84–105.
26. On Stein, see Robert M. Spaulding Jr., *Imperial Japan's Higher Civil Service Examinations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), Chapter 7 ('Ito and Stein, 1882'), 43–50.
27. See John House and Mary Anne Stevens (eds.), *Post-Impressionism: Cross-Currents in European Painting* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1979); Lina Bolzoni and Alina Payne (eds.), *The Italian Renaissance in the Nineteenth Century: Revision, Revival and Return* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
28. Among numerous references to Japonisme in Paris, see the cultural event Japonisme 2018, which celebrated the 160th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and France (https://japonismes.org, accessed 21 December 2021).
29. The preface of the book states: 'Mr. Murray wishes to point out that this book is written in English by a native of Japan (Okakura, *The Ideals of the East*, v).
30. The Japanese translation, entitled *Toyo no Riso*, was published by Sogensha, Tokyo, in 1938.
31. 'ASIA, THE MOTHER OF IDEAS: Kakasu Okakura's Book on the Art of His Native Land and the Ideals of the East', *The New York Times*, 25 June 1904. In the second edition of *The Ideals of the East*, published in 1904, the name of the author was spelled in the Japanese order (i.e. family name followed by given name) as 'Okakura-Kakuzo'.
32. Okakura, *The Ideals of the East*, ix–xxii. For further discussion on Okakura and Sister Nivedita, see John Rosenfield, 'Okakura Kakuzo and Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita): A Brief Episode', *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 24 (2012): 58–69
33. Okakura, *The Ideals of the East*, xx.
34. For further discussion on Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita, see Jeffery D. Long, 'Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita: Beacons of Dharma for India and the West', in *Beacons of Dharma: Spiritual Exemplars for the Modern Age*, ed. Christopher Patrick Miller, Michael Reading, and Jeffery D. Long (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020), 19–39.
35. Okakura, *The Ideals of the East*, 83.
36. For further discussion on the problem of periodisation in art histories of the non-Western world by means of religious and dynastic labelling, especially regarding 'Persian art', see Yuka Kadoi, 'The (Re-) Birth of Ilkhanid Art', in *The Mongol Empire in Global History and Art History*, ed. Anne Dunlop (Milan and Cambridge, MA: Officina Libraria and Harvard University Press, 2023), 239–263.
37. According to Mitter, 'However persuasive Coomaraswamy's interpretations may have been it did not really bring us any closer to the understanding of Indian art. In short, the limitations in Coomaraswamy arose from the fact that even he ultimately fell back upon European standards for evaluating Indian art, a problem which had beset his predecessors' (Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 285).
38. For a recent historiographical reassessment of the *Orient oder Rom* debate that exploded in Vienna around 1900, see Ivan Foletti and Francesco Lovino (eds.), *Orient oder Rom? History and Reception of a Historiographical Myth* (*1901–1970*) (Rome: Viella, 2018). In addition to this debate, see Susan Whitfield's in-depth studies on the concept of East–West dichotomies and the appropriation of the term 'Silk Road': 'The Perils of Dichotomous Thinking: Ebb and Flow Rather than East and West', in *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari and Amilcare Iannucci (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 247–261; 'The Expanding Silk Road: UNESCO and BRI', *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 81 (2020): 23–42.
39. See Alaister Bonnett, *The Idea of the West: Culture, Politics and History* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).
40. Quoted in Horioka, *The Life of Kakuzo*, 17–18. His lecture, 'Modern Problems in Painting', was published in Howard J. Rogers (ed.), *Congress of Arts and Science Universal Exposition, St. Louis, 1904*, vol. 3 (Boston, MA, and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1906), 663–678. For further discussion, see Miya Elise Mizuta, '"Fair Japan": On Art and War at the Saint Louis World's Fair, 1904', *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 28, no. 1 (2006): 28–52.

41. This information comes from https://www.gardnermuseum.org/experience/collection/16099, accessed 28 December 2021.
42. On Nihonga, see Ellen P. Conant, J. Thomas Rimer, and Stephen D. Owyoung, *Nihonga, Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting, 1868–1968* (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis Art Museum, 1995).
43. See Victoria Weston, *Japanese Painting and National Identity: Okakura Tenshin and His Circle* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

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PICASSO'S MEETING WITH BUDDHA

Tomáš Winter

In autumn 1911, young Czech painters, sculptors, and architects founded the Group of Fine Artists (Skupina výtvarných umělců) in Prague. Painters Emil Filla (1882–1953), Antonín Procházka (1882–1945), and Vincenc Beneš (1883–1979); sculptor Otto Gutfreund (1889–1927); architects Pavel Janák (1882–1956) and Josef Gočár (1880–1945); and, later, art historians Václav Vilém Štech (1885–1974) and Antonín Matějček (1889–1950) were among the key members of the group. Their fascination with French Cubism is reflected in their works.[1] The inspirations for their artworks, however, were much broader, and the members manifested these influences clearly at the group's exhibitions, mainly at the third one. Among the sources of inspiration for their art, Asian art played one the most important roles. The aim of this article is to show how this was reflected at the group's exhibitions and in the texts and publications of the group's members.

THE FIRST AND SECOND EXHIBITIONS

At the beginning of 1912, the Group of Fine Artists organised their first exhibition,[2] which took place at the Municipal House in Prague, as did the group's follow-up exhibitions. In the exhibition space, designed by Pavel Janák, there were paintings by Emil Filla, Václav Špála (1885–1946), Josef Čapek (1887–1945), and others, as well as statues by Otto Gutfreund. The group's show generally placed an unusual emphasis on architecture and design, represented by architectural models, tapestry design, furniture, vases, and other everyday objects (such as lamps, cutlery, and clocks) designed by Pavel Janák, Josef Gočár, Josef Chochol (1880–1956), František Kysela (1881–1941), and others.[3]

The second exhibition took place in autumn 1912. The core group was extended to include two former painters from the Osma group (The Eight): Friedrich Feigl (1885–1965) and Willy Nowak (1886–1977). Both of these artists built on their contacts with German expressionists from the Die Brücke group. In 1911, Otto Mueller (1874–1930) and his wife, Marie, stayed with Nowak in Mníšek pod Brdy near Prague for three months, and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880–1938)

joined them for two weeks. Mueller and Kirchner also met with Emil Filla and Bohumil Kubišta (1884–1918); together, they decided to organise an exhibition in Prague.[4] This idea came to fruition at Skupina's second exhibition, where Die Brücke was represented by not only Kirchner and Mueller but also Erich Heckel (1883–1970) and Karl Schmidt-Rottluf (1884–1976). Yet some of Skupina's members were critical of Die Brücke's works. For example, Josef Čapek reproached Die Brücke artists for superficial virtuosity, casual execution, and improvisation.[5] The Die Brücke artists were featured in the main hall, modified by Josef Gočár to look like a crystal, a form that resonated with the works by both the Czech and German artists.

The second exhibition followed up on the first group show by placing emphasis on architecture, furniture, and other applied art objects. Furniture sets were made by Prague Art Workshops, founded upon the initiative of the Group of Fine Artists' architects in May 1912. The workshops aimed to produce furniture as practical objects with high artistic value. At the exhibition, the individual furniture sets for different purposes (e.g. dining room, sitting room) were placed in four separate spaces, thus evoking actual interiors, complete with paintings on the walls. Painter Bohumil Kubišta noted this in his review of the exhibition, suggesting that this was a test of how modern paintings could complement modern furniture in a home's interior.[6] Compared to the group's first exhibition, the furniture display was more effective and clear because it evoked real rooms of modern flats and houses. It manifested the group's efforts to create a complex style that was suitable for modern bourgeois interiors. Members of the group connected this style directly with the formation of society. They repeated the same concept of the presentation at the *Werkbund* exhibition in Cologne in May 1914 in a series of Prague Art Workshops.

Apart from the German artists, there were other foreign guests showing their work at the exhibition. Above the sofa by Josef Gočár, one could see the paintings by Othon Friesz (1879–1949) (*Landscape*, undated) and André Derain (1880–1954) (*Motreuil-sur-Mer*, 1910 and *Cadaqués*, 1910). Derain's works were lent by the art historian and collector Vincenc Kramář (1877–1960). Another painting from Kramář's collection, a small still life by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), was added to the exhibition around 20 October, but it was not included in the catalogue. This was most likely one of Picasso's 1912 still lifes which Kramář bought from Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. This was the first time Picasso's original work had been presented in the Czech milieu. We don't know why the painting was not present from the beginning of the exhibition.[7]

THE THIRD EXHIBITION

The third exhibition of the Group of Fine Artists took place in spring 1913.[8] The committee of the group decided on a unique concept: the group's members would not exhibit their own works; instead, they would showcase an array of works of diverse periods and provenances, including European, Asian, and American works from the Middle Ages to the present. The artists' decision to exclude their own works from the exhibition can be understood as an attempt to create a collective artwork – an installation.[9] 'French' art was represented by forty paintings and prints by Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque (1882–1963), André Derain, and Juan Gris (1887–1927). Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1884–1979) loaned most of these artworks.[10]

The section of older European art included casts of Gothic sculptures from Czech-speaking countries,[11] and there were also photographs of two works by El Greco (ca. 1541–1614) and Rembrandt (1606–1669) as well as several seventeenth-century woodcuts. Folk art was substantially represented at the exhibition, with over fifty reverse glass paintings and several examples of mostly nineteenth-century religious-themed carvings and ceramics from the private collections of about twenty lenders.[12]

The section dedicated to art from outside of Europe had a special place at the exhibition. It contained painted textiles from Sri Lanka loaned by the painter

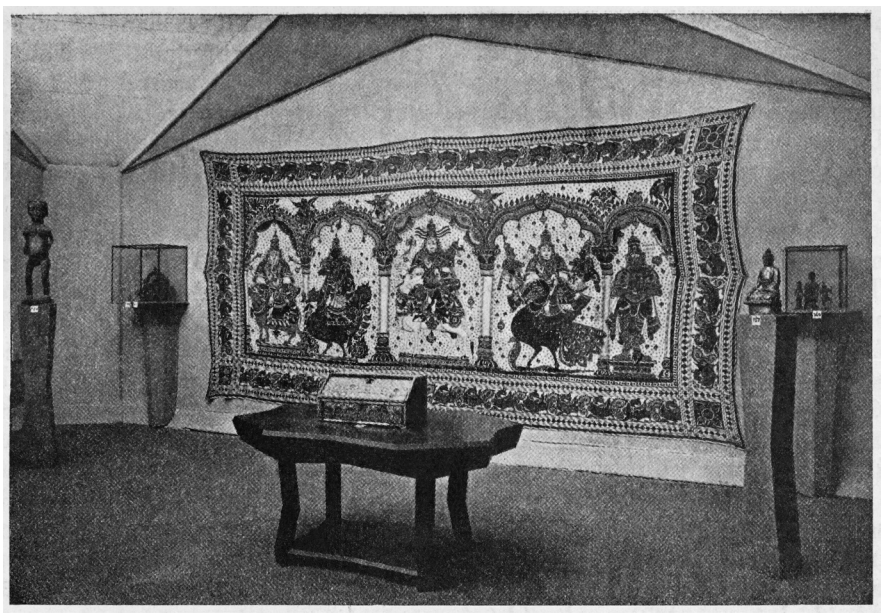

Figure 1. Exhibition of 'exotic art' in the third exhibition of the Group of Fine Artists at the Municipal House in Prague. 1913. Photo from *Umělecký měsíčník* 2, 1912–1914. Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences.

Otakar Nejedlý (1883–1957), who spent several months on the island in 1909–1910. An ivory box and a small bronze altar from India were loaned by the son of the industrialist František Melichar (1842–1907) from Brandýs nad Labem. The catalogue also lists statuettes of gods from India acquired from Prague physician František Wachsmann, a gilded bronze sculpture of Buddha from China, and a Japanese wooden figure sculpture from the collection of Václav Jaroslav Klofáč (1868–1942), a member of the Imperial Council (*Reichsrat*) – the Parliament of the Cisleithanian part of Austria-Hungary (fig. 1). Thanks to Czech artists' contacts within the German milieu, it was possible to acquire an African sculpture from the collection of the painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, although this sculpture turned out to be a forgery.[13] Adolf Mikeš (1864–1929), a professor at the Prague music school, contributed a pre-Columbian stone sculpture. This 'exotic' section was complemented with photographs of African sculptures, on loan from Kahnweiler, and photographs of Indian and Chinese sculptures, on loan from an unknown person, probably from a member of the group.

In the catalogue introduction, the painter Vincenc Beneš explains this seemingly incoherent mélange of European and non-European artworks of different periods and styles. He writes about the young artists' admiration for old artworks 'that address questions of volume, surface, geometric synthesis of form and perceive nature non-optically'.[14] Rather than looking for identical sensibilities, the exhibition focused on finding formal parallels. This concept was far-reaching, including Romanesque, Gothic, and Baroque art; African, Oceanic and pre-Columbian art; folk art; and art of the entire 'Orient'.[15]

EMIL FILLA'S VIEW

The same concept is visible in *Umělecký měsíčník* (Art Monthly), the journal published by the Group of Fine Artists from October 1911 to spring 1914. Apart from reproductions of European paintings by Old Masters and modern artists, the magazine's first volume contained photographs of objects from Persia, China, Japan, India, Egypt, and the Pacific.[16] This was essentially an anthropological approach: the journal included a mixture of art objects from different continents and periods. There was not only 'Western' art but also works that the members of the group generally, vaguely, and uncritically identified as 'oriental' and 'exotic' art: Asian, African, Oceanic, and pre-Columbian art.

This approach is exemplified by Emil Filla's study titled 'Život a dílo' (Life and Work),[17] accompanied by illustrations of European, Egyptian, Asian, and Oceanic art that were shown in the following sequence: the Egyptian statue of Ramses II in Luxor, a statue from Japan, an Indian sculptural figure of a kneeling monk, a fragment of a relief from Egypt, a Chinese statue of Bodhidharma (or Tamo), a wooden figure *moʻai kavakava* from Easter Island, and August Rodin's sculpture *Perseus and Meduse*. This sequence corresponds to the general character of the

article. Filla searches for common features among the different works from all over the world. He discusses the sense of motion in surface planes in Baroque, Chinese, and Indian art, and he defines parallels between the linear treatment of decoration in Romanesque tympanums and in Chinese and Japanese statues. To do so, he employs Alois Riegl's specific concept of *Kunstwollen*, as 'a will to art', founded on similar premises and existing in geographically and temporally distant regions. Such 'will', according to Filla, 'can and necessarily must lead to the same results'.[18]

Ideologically, Filla was thus able to combine art styles of different periods and locations and to justify this alliance through a methodological approach based on a specific application of Riegl's *Kunstwollen* and formal analysis of particular works. In Filla's view, the form of an artwork is closely connected to its contents. The form expresses its creator and the creator's life. He considered the form to be an 'expression of life itself', as Vojtěch Lahoda noted.[19] Filla tried to find a similar creative power in different styles and epochs. Chinese, Japanese, and the whole of Asian art could be part of such a specific concept, together with African, Oceanic, Native American, and European art, including folk art.[20]

RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE

A comparison of the group's approach to Asian art with the Russian avant-garde could help define the character of the group's creative effort in more detail. In 1913, the *Target* exhibition was held in Moscow. It presented works by Mikhail Larionov (1881–1964), Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962), Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935), Marc Chagall (1887–1985), and others. In the introduction to the catalogue, Larionov claimed:

> We aspire towards the East and direct our attention towards national art. We protest against the servile subordination to the West which has vulgarized our own forms and those of the East, has reduced everything to a uniform level, and has delivered them back to us.[21]

Although the concept of the East was not precisely defined by Russian avant-garde artists, it is possible to detect its connection with Asia. When they spoke about art of the East, these artists meant Asian art generally.

Larionov, in accordance with Goncarova and Aleksandr Shevchenko (1883–1948), considered the East to be the geographic source of all art, including Western art. In the Primitivism manifesto, Shevchenko connected this movement with Eastern art and claimed that 'the whole of man's culture, generally speaking, derived from Asia and not vice versa, as some assert'.[22] Shevchenko therefore did not see any reason to appropriate Western art, which he perceived as more or less unoriginal. His Neo-Primitivism was supposed to derive above all from Asia

and its 'barbarian' art. He only considered Western art as a sort of supplement of Eastern origin with special formal qualities which he understood as essentially European.

CZECH INTERPRETATION OF ASIAN ART

The point of view of the Russian avant-garde was completely different from that of the members of the Group of Fine Artists. Czech artists didn't speak about an opposition between Asian and European art. On the contrary, they saw world culture as a whole. Their approach was not nationalistic but global. They felt that they were a part of one culture, including various areas and periods. They felt that they were able to derive inspiration from all over the world without ideological limitations. The main factor was art quality, connected with a category of authenticity and originality. It was important that the artists saw and explained an older art through the prism of their contemporary creative effort, in fact through the prism of Cubism, as Vojtěch Lahoda noted. Lahoda described this way following Filla's explanation of medieval art:

> Filla writes here [in the article 'Život a dílo'] that Gothic art, in the Christian view, destroys its physical existence, merges with 'the creator who is embodied in all things', i.e. it objectifies 'its subjective being by disappearing in the universe'. In order to understand Filla's way of thinking and his relation of the old masters to Cubism, the term Gothic art must be substituted for the term 'Cubist artist'. Filla rarely writes explicitly about Cubism, he always explains it with other terms or styles.[23]

It's also possible to document this point with Vincenc Beneš's article on Japanese woodcuts published in *Umělecký měsíčník* in 1913. The text was a review of the exhibition of the Japanese woodblock prints from the collection of Benedictine priest Sigismund Bouška (1867–1942). The show took place in Prague and Brno in the same year. Beneš criticised Japanese prints because of their decorative technique and lack of three-dimensional qualities. Japan was, in his eyes, merely a cultural province of Chinese. For that reason, he preferred Chinese art generally and he was also able to describe the relation of the group's members to Chinese works of art from their own historical position. Beneš claimed that the basis for the relationship to Chinese art originates from

> an analogous manner of expression through abstract form, the cancellation of the beholder's objective perspective, the shift of the points of view to the centre of action, frequently also the way abstract light is employed, and above all, the character of motion and ethereal lightness, so symptomatic of the Oriental spirit (fig. 2).[24]

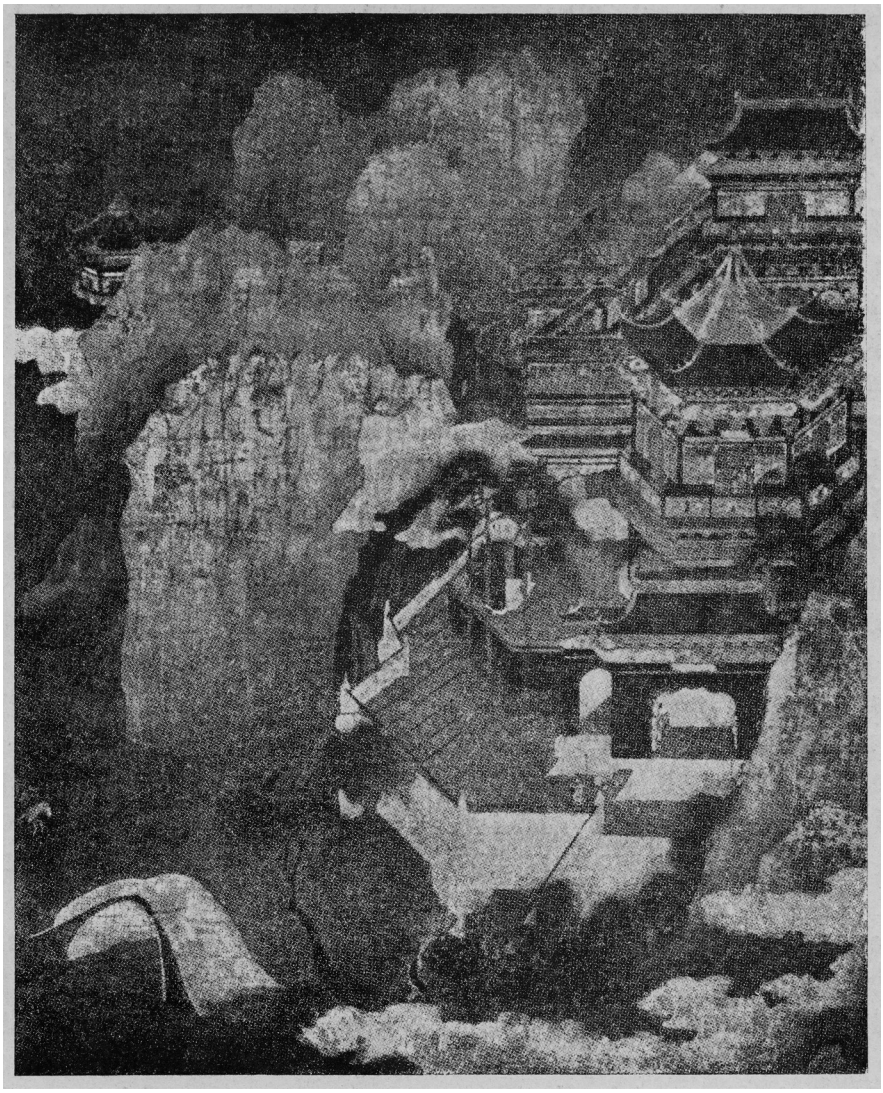

Figure 2. *Landscape with Palace* attributed to Li Zhaodao. Tang dynasty (675–758). Photo from *Umělecký měsíčník* 2, 1912–1914. Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences.

It's clear that these are qualities that Beneš derived from his own efforts as well as those of the whole group. There were other important attributes in Cubist paintings, such as monumentality, subordination to a unified whole, a strong sense of spatiality, and an attempt at a firm grasp of visual expression, which Beneš also discusses in relation to Chinese painting (fig. 3). I don't think it is important whether Chinese art has this quality, because generally it is not possible to determine. It's more important that Beneš and other artists could see Chinese art in

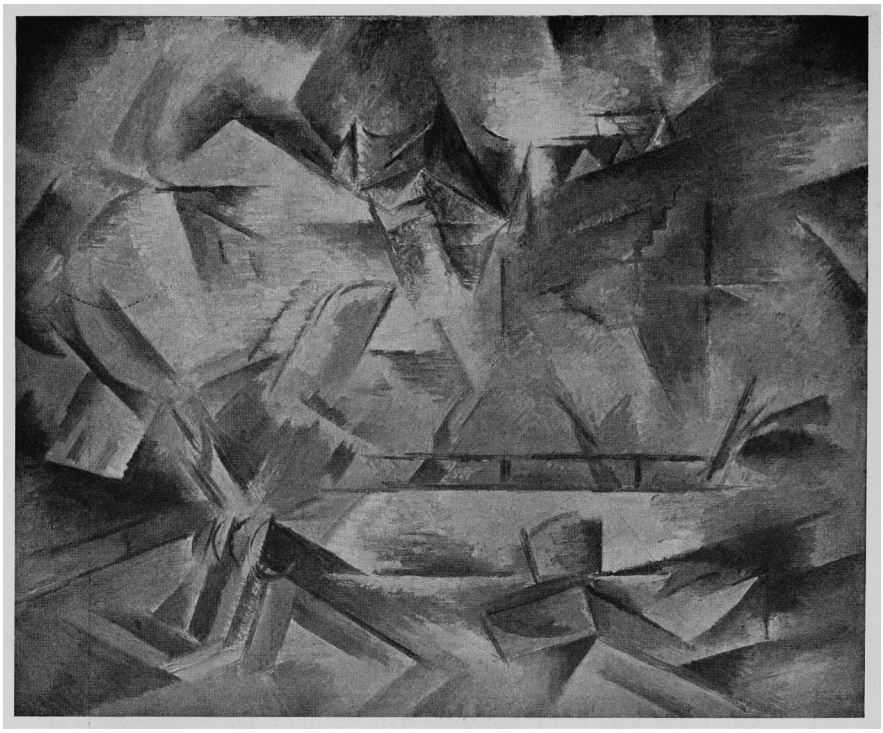

Figure 3. *Embankment* by Vincenc Beneš. 1912. Oil on canvas. Destroyed by the artist. Photo from *Umělecký měsíčník* 2, 1912–1914. Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences.

close connection to their Cubist works. In their opinion Chinese art provided a foundation for their own contemporary art, especially for the formal qualities of Cubism. Chinese art was not explained as less valuable, 'primitive', or 'degenerate'; there was no explicit question of conquering it.

However, it is true that the explanation of Chinese art, invalid criticism of Japanese art, and the approach to non-European art generally were distorted by the views of the group's members. From the critical viewpoint of postcolonial theory, we can speak about appropriation and, moreover, about the abuse or rape of original Asian culture because the objects were removed (ideologically and physically) from their original context and used for the specific purposes of Czech modern artists, who felt that these objects were representatives of modern European culture.

ANALOGIES

In the way the sources for new modern art were presented at the group's third exhibition, we could see some analogies in several European exhibitions before WWI. The *Oriental Exhibition* was held from April to May 1911 at the House of Artists in Budapest. It contained Oceanic and African sculptures, Persian miniatures, Japanese prints, and terracottas and bronzes from ancient China, Tibet, Cambodia, and India. According to Jean-Louis Paudrat, the objects of non-European art 'were presented as not only equaling those of the classical tradition in artistic value but even as the leaven for the renewal of contemporary sculpture and painting'.[25] However, there was no modern European art at the exhibition. It was the same in the case of other two exhibitions: the exhibition of Asian and Egyptian art, *l'art nègre*, and Aztec Art at the Galeries Levesque in Paris in 1913[26] and the exhibition *Statuary in Wood by African Savages: The Root of Modern Art* in the gallery of Photo-Secession group at 291 Fifth Avenue in New York in 1914.[27]

When the German group Blaue Reiter was preparing its first exhibition,[28] the painter Franz Marc (1880–1916) wanted to include the reverse paintings on glass together with the artworks of the group members.[29] In the end the reverse paintings did not appear in the exhibition; however, the group members didn't reject the idea of a direct confrontation of their work with folk art when shown publicly. The second exhibition was held from mid-February to early April 1912 in the Munich-based gallery run by Hans Goltz (1873–1927) and focused on drawing and printmaking. In addition to works by the core members of the group and their guests – Pablo Picasso, Mikhail Larionov, Natalia Goncharova, Kazimir Malevich, and others – there was a series of eight Russian folk prints there, so-called *lubki*.

Lubki also played a significant role in the circle around Larionov, who had his own collection of these prints. In February 1913 he lent the collection for an exhibition prepared by architect Nikolai Dmitrievich Vinogradov (1885–1980) in the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture.[30] In addition to other objects from Larionov's collection – two African sculptures, among other things – there were also bronze and copper icons from the property of Natalia Goncharova and several of her own studies for contemporary Russian *lubki*, based on folk prints. Larionov wrote an introduction for the exhibition catalogue, which he used again in the catalogue of *lubki* and original Russian icons, prepared on his own in March 1913 in the art salon on Bolshaya Dmitrovka.[31]

With regard to Picasso and Braque, we probably couldn't find any exhibition before WWI in which non-European art was displayed together with their paintings. The only exception was Prague's exhibitions. Although Picasso was inspired by a wide range of non-European sources,[32] he had no interest in presenting his own works together with these objects. The first exhibition containing Picasso's painting together with *l'art nègre* was the first exhibition of association Lyre and Palette, founded by poets Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961) and Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) and Chilean artist Manuel Ortiz de Zárate (1887–1946).[33] It took place in

Émile Lejeune's courtyard studio at 6 rue Huyghens in Paris from 19 November to 5 December 1916. Presented there were paintings by Ortiz, paintings and drawings by Polish-born French painter Moïse Kisling (1891–1953), a drawing by Henri Matisse (1869–1954), two still lifes by Picasso, fifteen canvases and designs by Amedeo Modigliani (1884–1920), and twenty-five sculptures, masks, fetishes, and idols from Africa and Oceania.[34]

CONCLUSION

The meeting of Buddha and Picasso at the third exhibition of the Group of Fine Artists in Prague in 1913 was very special. After two exhibitions presenting the works of the group's members as the foundation of a new style, the artists omitted their own works and decided to present only the sources of inspiration for their art. There was French contemporary art represented by Picasso, Braque, and Derain as an example of the most current art, on the one hand, and older European and non-European art, on the other hand. The Czech artists considered these works to be a source for their new language of art, a new artistic style. They didn't generally prefer Asian art to African sculptures or folk reverse paintings to medieval art. All sources stood on the same level, and all of them were important. The artists didn't want to copy them mechanically, but they tried to find the basic formal principles that they could transfer to their own works. They didn't understand their own art as part of a national or regional style but as a part of international modernism, whose centre was not only in Paris but also in Prague.

From mid-February to 19 April 1914, the Group of Fine Artists organised their fourth exhibition in Prague. The show's concept followed on from group's second exhibition and included works by both members and guests. Modern art from abroad was represented by Pablo Picasso (two paintings from the collection of Vincenc Kramář and two prints), etchings by Georges Braque and André Derain on loan from Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, two works by Max Pechstein, and two paintings by Edvard Munch purchased from his 1905 Prague exhibition.[35] The show also contained five wooden figure sculptures from the Belgian Congo and Cameroon, probably lent by Vincenc Kramář, who is known to have owned African sculptures in this period.[36] It's clear that the presentation of non-European art was not as extensive as it was at the third exhibition. Nevertheless, the basic aim was similar: to present the new Czech art in the broader context of other artworks, in the context of its sources. Spectators could see Picasso's works next to Filla' paintings or African sculptures together with statues by Otto Gutfreund. Czech Cubism was presented as part of a modern international art movement in which the non-European played an important role.

NOTES

1. For the history of the Group of Fine Artists, see especially Miroslav Lamač, *Osma a Skupina výtvarných umělců 1907–1917* [The Eight and the Group of Fine Artists] (Prague: Odeon, 1988); Vojtěch Lahoda, *Český kubismus* [Czech Cubism] (Prague: Brána, 1996); Pavel Liška, Jiří Švestka, and Tomáš Vlček, eds., *Czech Cubism 1909–1925: Art, Architecture, Design* (Prague: i3 CZ and Modernista, 2006).
2. The exhibition was open from 5 January to March 1912.
3. See more in Tomáš Winter, 'Maison cubiste po česku' [Maison cubiste in Bohemia], in *1912. 100 let od otevření Obecního domu v Praze [1912. 100 Years from the Opening of Municipal House in Prague]*, ed. Otto M. Urban and Filip Wittlich (Řevnice and Prague: Arbor vitae and Municipal House, 2012), 100–103.
4. Marie Rakušanová, 'Velké míjení, nebo nenápadná rezonance? Návštěva Otty Muellera, Marie Muellerové a Ernsta Ludwiga Kirchnera v roce 1911 v Čechách' [Great Passing by or Furtive Resonance? The Visit of Otto Mueller, Maria Mueller and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner in Bohemia in 1911], *Umění/Art* 54 (2006): 142–161.
5. Josef Čapek, 'II. výstava Skupiny výtvarných umělců' [2nd Exhibition of the Group of Fine Artists], *Lumír* 41, no. 1 (1912–1913): 45.
6. Bohumil Kubišta, 'Druhá výstava Skupiny výtvarných umělců v Obecním domě (1912)' [The Second Exhibition of the Group of Fine Artists in the Municipal House (1912)], in *Předpoklady slohu. Úvahy – kritiky – polemiky* [Assumptions of Style. Considerations – Reviews – Polemics], ed. František Kubišta (Prague: Otto Girgal, 1947), 93–95.
7. See more in Luise Mahler and Anna Jozefacka, 'Cubism Goes East: Kahnweiler's Central European Network of Agents and Collectors', in *Years of Disarray, 1908–1928, Avant-Gardes in Central Europe*, ed. Karel Srp (Řevnice and Olomouc: Arbor vitae societas and Museum of Art, 2018), 56–69.
8. Anna Masaryková, 'III. výstava Skupiny výtvarných umělců' [3rd Exhibition of the Group of Fine Artists], *Umění/Art* 30 (1982): 379–381.
9. Tomáš Winter, 'Proti individualismu! Avantgarda jako kolektivní práce' [Againts Individualism! The Avant-Garde as a Collective Work], in *Tvůrce jako předmět dějin umění. Pozice autora po jeho 'smrti'* ['The Creator as a Subject of Art History. The Position of the Author after His 'Death'], ed. Petr Jindra and Radim Vondráček (Prague: Artefactum, 2020), 111–117.
10. Mahler and Jozefacka 'Cubism Goes East: Kahnweiler's Central European Network of Agents and Collectors', 56–69.
11. Milada Studničková, 'Kopie jako iniciační artefakt. Svorník s tváří Krista kostela sv. Gotharda ve Slaném' [Copy as an Artefact of Initiation. The Keystone with Vera Icon in the St. Gothard Church in Slaný], in *Rembrandtova tramvaj. Kubismus, tradice a 'jiné' umění* [Rembrandt's Tram. Cubism, Tradition, and 'Other' Art], ed. Tomáš Winter et al. (Pilsen: West Bohemian Gallery, 2015), 56–67.
12. Tomáš Winter, 'A Fascination with Folk Art: Modernism and the Avant-Garde in Munich, Prague and Moscow around 1913', *Umění/Art* 62 (2016): 240–253.
13. Tomáš Winter, 'Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Negerplastik* and the Mistake of Czech Cubists,' *Umění/Art* 61 (2013): 356–361.
14. Vincenc Beneš, [Untitled introduction], in *Skupina výtvarných umělců. III. výstava* [The Group of Fine Artists. 3rd Exhibition] (Prague: The Group of Fine Artists, 1913), n.p. (exh. cat.).
15. Tomáš Winter, 'The Group of Fine Artists and Primitivism in the Czech Lands', *Centropa* 11, no. 1 (2011): 19–33; Tomáš Winter, 'Chinese Art and Czech Modernism', in *Masters of 20th-Century Chinese Ink Painting from Collections of the National Gallery in Prague*, ed. Michaela Pejčochová (Prague: National Gallery, 2008), 38–54.
16. *Umělecký měsíčník* [Art Monthly] 1, 1911–1912.
17. Emil Filla, 'Život a dílo' [Life and Work], *Umělecký měsíčník* [Art Monthly] 1 (1911–1912): 314–328.
18. Filla, 'Život a dílo', 326.
19. See more in Vojtěch Lahoda, *Emil Filla* (Prague: Academia, 2007), 125.
20. See more in Vojtěch Lahoda, 'Rok 1912 Emila Filly: svědectví deníku' [Emil Filla's Year 1912: A Testimony of His Diary], *Umění/Art* 36 (1988): 226–333.
21. Mikhail Larionov, [Untitled introduction], in *Mishen* [Target] (Moscow: Target 1913), quoted in John E. Bowlt, 'Mikhail Larionov and the Primitive', *Experiment* I (1995): 169. Translated by John E. Bowlt.
22. Aleksandr Shevchenko, *Neoprimitivism: Its Theory, Its Potentials, Its Achievements* (Moscow: n.p., 1913), quoted in Bowlt, *Russian Art of Avant-Garde*, 48. Translated by John E. Bowlt.
23. Lahoda, *Emil Filla*, 125. See also Lahoda's explanation of Vincenc Kramář's interpretation of old European masters from the Baroque period: Vojtěch Lahoda, 'Silnice kubismus Vincence Kramáře, zastávka jménem John Constable a poetika dějin umění' [Vincenc Kramář's Cubism Road, a Stop Named John

Constable, and the Poetics of Art History], in *V mužském mozku. Sborník k 70. narozeninám Petra Wittlicha* [In a Male Mind. Miscellany on the Occasion of the 70th Anniversary of Petr Wittlich], ed. Lenka Bydžovská and Roman Prahl (Dolní Břežany: Scriptorium, 2002), 19–20.

24. Vincenc Beneš, 'Japonský dřevoryt' [Woodblock Printing in Japan], *Umělecký měsíčník* [Art Monthly] 2 (1912–1914): 147.
25. Jean-Louis Paudrat, 'From Africa', in *'Primitivism' in the 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, vol. 1, ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 148 (exh. cat.). See also Krisztina Passuth, 'Keleti kiállitâs a mûvészhâzban' [Oriental Exhibition at the House of Artists], *Mûvészettôrtèneti Èrtesitô* [Bulletin of Art History], no. 1–2 (2001): 85–102.
26. The exhibition took place from 16 May to 15 June 1913. See Paudrat, 'From Africa', 152.
27. The exhibition took place from 3 November to 8 December 1914. See Paudrat, 'From Africa', 153.
28. It took place at the turn of 1911 and 1912 in Thannhauser Modern Gallery in Munich.
29. Franz Marc, 'An Wassily Kandinsky' [To Wassily Kandinsky], in *Der Blaue Reiter. Dokumente einer geistiger Bewegung* [Blaue Reiter. Documents of an Intellectual Movement], ed. Andreas Huneke (Leipzig: Reclam, 1986), 164–165.
30. E. B. Ovsyannikova, 'Larionov i Goncharova. Materialy archiva N. D. Vinogradova' [Larionov and Goncharova. Files from N.D. Vinogradov's Archives], in *N. S. Goncharova i M. F. Larionov: Issledovania i publikacii* [N.S. Goncharova and M.F. Larionov: Research and Publications] (Moscow: Nauka, 2001), 55–72; Sarah Warren, *Mikhail Larionov and the Cultural Politics of Late Imperial Russia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 53–55.
31. *Vystavka ikonopisnych podlinnikov i lubkov, organizovannaya M. F. Larionovym* [Exhibition of Icons and Folk Prints Organised by M.F. Larionov] (Moscow: Artistic salon Bolshaya Dmitrovka, 1913) (exh. cat.).
32. See Bärbel Küster, *Matisse and Picasso als Kulturreisende: Primitivismus und Anthropologie um 1900* [Matisse and Picasso as Cultural Travellers: Primitivism and Anthropology around 1900] (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2003).
33. See Dan Franck, *Bohemian Paris: Picasso, Modigliani, Matisse and the Birth of Modern Art* (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 259–260; Claude Leroy, 'Lyre et Palette 1916–1919' [Lyre and Palette 1916–1919], *Feuille de routes* [Roadmap], no. 53 (2015): 173–175.
34. Paudrat, 'From Africa', 154. See: https://transatlanticencounters.rrchnm.org/items/show/5222 (accessed 10 September 2023).
35. The now missing *Student Grove*, on loan from the poet Tereza Koseová, and *Dance on the Shore*, then owned by the sculptor Stanislav Sucharda. The *Dance in the Shore* is now the property of the National Gallery in Prague.
36. Vojtěch Lahoda and Olga Uhrová, eds., *Vincenc Kramář. Od starých mistrů v Picassovi* [Vincenc Kramář. From the Old Masters to Picasso] (Prague: National Gallery, 2000), 264.

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COLLECTIONS AND COLLECTORS, NETWORKS AND DISPLAY

TWENTIETH-CENTURY CULTURAL POLITICS AND NETWORKS: THE GENESIS OF THE ASIAN ART COLLECTION AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN PRAGUE*

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Within the historical context of museum collecting of Asian art in the Central European region, a prestigious collection department was established in the second half of the 20th century – within the historical territory of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (also known as the Czech Lands) – focusing on the art of Asian and Islamic cultures, which was housed at the National Gallery in Prague (NGP). From a methodological perspective, we are embarking upon a historiographical analysis of the origin of this new state collection, which assesses not only issues related to the function of the museum as a tool for legitimising collections, but also those concerning the art historical field of Asian and Islamic cultures within the context of the social and political conditions of post-war Czechoslovakia.[1]

It is necessary to mention as an introduction that the department – at the time named the *Department of Oriental Art* – was founded in 1951.[2] This occurred not only within a different cultural and political context and with a different social demand, but also with a different collection concept in comparison with older museum institutions in the Czech Lands that housed art collections of Asian provenance. Specifically we can mention the Náprstek Museum in Prague, with collection acquisitions dating back to the 1860s; it was nationalised in 1932 and subsequently, in 1943, became a subsidiary of the National Museum in Prague.[3] Alongside this museum, in the second half of the 19th century, further museum collections, focusing on artefacts of Asian provenance and other subject matters, were established under the influence of international exhibitions in London (1862), Paris (1867) and Vienna (1873), as well as the Arts & Crafts movement. In the Czech Lands, which from 1526 until 1918 were subjugated to the Austro Habsburg empire, interest was awakened in the collection of artistic products of Asian and Islamic cultures and the founding of applied arts museums especially as a result

of the Vienna Weltausstellung in 1873. Following the model of the Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry (Kunstgewerbemuseum, today's MAK),[4] a series of non-state museums were established featuring collections of Asian art, such as the Moravian Industrial Museum in Brno (1873),[5] the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec (1873), or the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague (1884).[6] With regard to their significance, museum institutions functioned as a platform for disseminating artistic values and education, thereby developing a territorial and national identity, a modern society, and, last but not least, also industry.

When reflecting upon the establishment of a new collection department at the NGP, it is therefore essential to consider the broader historical context and the socio-economic circumstances of inter-war Czechoslovakia. These factors set the stage for the founding not only of another museum collection, but also for the establishment and development of a field of art history focusing on Asian and Islamic cultures in the post-war period in Czechoslovakia. Thanks to the close co-operation between orientalists and art historians working in state administration, as well as museum and monument care institutions, the academic sphere, and schools, a new disciplinary platform was established. This platform enjoyed a network of contacts with the art scene of the time, which the NGP systematically cultivated.

THE FIRST ACQUISITIONS AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE CULTURAL POLICY OF THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC

Within the framework of the political and economic strategy of inter-war Czechoslovakia[7] an important theme was its economic and cultural orientation towards the geographical and geopolitical territory of the Orient.[8] The term 'Orient' was de facto adopted from the vocabulary of European historiography, free from the political connotation of colonial expansion by Czechoslovakia.[9] In *Masarykův slovník naučný* (Masaryk's Encyclopaedia), the term 'Orient' is geographically delineated as the region extending from the eastern Mediterranean, encompassing Turkey, Syria, and Egypt, to the eastern parts of the Middle East.[10] Nonetheless, scientific and economic interests actively expanded through Central to East Asia, and the concept of the Orient gradually came to include these regions as well.

One of the tools deployed for commercial expansion involved organising exhibitions of Asian art. They were hosted by First Czechoslovak Republic institutions such as the company Pražské vzorkové veletrhy (Prague Sample Fairs) in the building of the Trade Fair Palace (opened 1929), the Czechoslovak-Japanese Chamber of Commerce (established 1928), and the Japanese Section of the Oriental Institute (established 1933).[11] These institutions systematically cultivated commercial and cultural contacts, which supported exports of Czech firms to East Asia. Incidentally, the Oriental Institute, which was founded in 1922[12] by the renowned orientalist Alois Musil (1868–1944),[13] received financial and political support from President Masaryk, who had been engaged in an endeavour

to develop cultural and political relations with Japan since the end of the First World War.[14] Thanks to the establishment of the Czechoslovak-Japanese Chamber of Commerce in 1928, which represented prominent enterprises and cultural institutions including the Oriental Institute, Count Gerolf Coudenhove-Kalergi[15] cultivated cultural contacts as a member of its committee.

At the turn of 1930, the Trade Fair Palace became the venue for the first exhibition of Asian art aimed at fostering commercial interest in Asian destinations. This was the grandiose *Exhibition of Art from Outside Europe*[16] from the private collection of the celebrated Czech collector and writer Joe Hloucha (1881–1952).[17] The exhibition was opened with a speech by Václav Boháč (1874–1935), the then president of the Trade Fair Palace, relating to the programme of Czechoslovak exports to East Asia:

> In the East I see our salvation. We must therefore welcome all that is associated with the East. We ourselves must find our own path there. The birth of a young China is just beginning, and Siam, Japan and other Eastern states are gaining importance for our industry. We must take advantage of this opportune moment for us and establish both friendly and business contacts with the East, so that we may become firmly anchored there in the future. We are embarking on our first auspicious beginnings with Japan, which shall officially come to our country in the spring as an exhibitor. This exhibition also is important, and I therefore wish it every success in awakening a love for the East.[18]

Evidently it made little difference that the exhibits originated from a private collection, not to mention the fact that they also featured art works from Asia as well as Africa (fig. 1).[19] In short, Hloucha's exhibition fit in with the state cultural policy, which was also followed by the spring trade fair of Japanese firms from the art export industry.[20]

Hloucha primarily intended to make money from his collection, which he had amassed over the course of more than 30 years.[21] And here we find the source of the first acquisitions of Asian artworks for the future collection of the NGP and de facto also for the Náprstek Museum. Due to the global economic crisis that erupted only a few weeks before the opening of the exhibition,[22] in terms of sales the exhibition did not live up to Hloucha's expectations. Consequently, Hloucha offered his collections for auction in Berlin, which took place in December 1930. However, the Berlin auction also was far from unambiguously profitable for Hloucha, and it was mainly his collection of African sculptures that sold successfully. The situation was exploited by the then director of the Picture Gallery of the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art, Vincenc Kramář (1877–1960),[23] who was instrumental in founding the collections of the State Collection of Old Masters and attempted to acquire works of Asian provenance from private collections in order to establish the 'Orient' collection. He had incidentally maintained business contacts with Hloucha

Čís. 51 ROZKVĚT 9

Štíty z Oceanie.

Z VÝSTAVY JOE HLOUCHY

Výstavou mimoevropského umění a uměleckého průmyslu, otevřenou ve Veletržním paláci v Praze VII. dáno bylo pražskému obecenstvu nahlédnouti do nového exotického světa. Není v Praze veřejné sbírky, která by obsahovala to, co nám předvádí tato výstava, uspořádaná spisovatelem Joe Hlouchou z věcí, které během let nasbíral na svých cestách světem.

Po prvé může tu naše obecenstvo vedle krásných ukázek umění čínského a japonského, jako maleb, dřevorytů, porculánu, bronzu, výšivek, vidět skvělé výtvory tibetské a tonkinské, podivuhodné řezby afrických černochů a lidojedů Oceanie a zajímavé hliněné nádoby staroperuánské. Také náboženské umění buddhistické jest na výstavě zastoupeno nadmíru bohatě a právem budí nadšený obdiv všech četných návštěvníků.

Figury předků z Oceanie.

Vzácné sochy Buddhů.

Z výstavy mimoevropského umění a uměleckého průmyslu. Ze sbírek spisovatele Joe Hlouchy ve Veletržním paláci: Čínský náboženský obraz, originál (vpravo), pod ním socha čínského taoistického gyma.

Figure 1. From Joe Hloucha's collection at the *The Exhibition of Art and the Art Industry from Outside Europe*, Trade Fair Palace, Prague 1929–1930, *Rozkvět* (*obrázkový čtrnáctideník*) [Heyday, illustrated biweekly magazine], No. 51, An. 22 (1929).

since the early 1920s, when he purchased eight works of old European masters[24] for the Picture Gallery of the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art.[25]

Kramář had good knowledge not only of domestic but also of foreign collections of Asian art through his personal contacts. One of these was none other than the prominent banker Baron Eduard von der Heydt (1882–1964), whose collections became the foundation of the Museum Rietberg Zurich, established in 1952.[26] In a letter to Kramář, besides his interest in Kramář's collection of paintings,[27] which he viewed during a visit to Kramář in the Dejvice district of Prague, Baron Heydt also mentions a catalogue of his collection of East Asian art:[28]

> Ich gestatte mir, Ihnen mit gleicher Post einen Katalog meiner ostasiatischen Sammlung zuzusenden. Die Stuecke befinden sich zum Teil als Leihgabe im Ostasiatischen Museum in Berlin, zum Teil an meiner obigen Addresse [in Ascona, Monte Verità, Schweiz, author's note], wo ich mich im Sommer aufzuhalten pflege.[29]

Although Kramář received a personal invitation from Hloucha to attend the exhibition in the Trade Fair Palace,[30] due to the impact of the global economic crisis it was manifestly difficult to obtain sufficient funding from the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment (MŠANO)[31] for the purchase of works from Hloucha's collection.[32] Furthermore, after the end of the exhibition, Hloucha intended to sell his collection to the Náprstek Museum, but ultimately no agreement had been reached at the point.[33] An extraordinary situation helped persuade the ministry, which subsidised purchases for national collections, to purchase the first acquisitions of Asian art for state collections, because Hloucha's Asian collections for the greater part remained unsold after the Berlin auction. The Ministry of Culture took advantage of this opportunity in order to purchase from Hloucha's collection at least a fragment of Buddhist art, as well as art from China, Japan and Southeast Asia, that had originally been designated for the State Collection of Old Masters,[34] and became a part of the collections of the NGP (established 1949).[35]

Another distinguished collector from the First Czechoslovak Republic from whom Kramář acquired art of Asian provenance for the future state gallery (i.e. later NGP) was Josef Martínek (1888–1976). Similarly to Hloucha, he obtained artworks in Asia, specifically in China, where he was employed during the second decade of the 20th century at the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, and where he gained experience as an expert and collector, which he described colourfully to readers of the magazine *Světozor*:

> During the process of customs clearing, it was made possible for me to familiarise myself with all the objects of artistic value that were exported from China, and this provided me with the impetus to start my own collection of antiques. The outbreak of the revolution in 1911 and the subsequent disorder

that ensued throughout the whole of China caused objets d'art to be offered for sale; otherwise they would have remained forever in Chinese collections.[36]

He also relates fascinating observations of how tourists purchased Chinese antiques, unwittingly paying for overpriced goods 'in American dollars, […] although we in China always paid the same prices in Chinese dollars, the exchange rate of which was 4.70 to the American dollar. Tourists therefore often purchased worthless items for prices several times higher than us collectors,'[37] and, in addition, they also had to pay export duties on their purchases.

Martínek's exhibition in the Trade Fair Palace, which followed Hloucha's extensive presentation, was thematically focused on old Chinese art (fig. 2).[38] Despite the persisting economic crisis and the limited state subsidy, Kramář was successful in securing financial resources from the private sector in order to purchase Chinese paintings and sculptures from Martínek's collection – a plan he executed to some degree:[39] 'it would be useful if our economic contacts with the Orient, the importance of which for us is ever-increasingly emphasised, were also more deeply reinforced in the spiritual field.'[40]

It is necessary to add that additional artworks from the Martínek collection, which were on sale in the Mánes building, where in 1930 Martínek opened a

Figure 2. From Josef Martínek's collection at the *The Exhibition of Old Chinese Art: The Collection of J. Martínek*, Trade Fair Palace, Prague 1930, *Prager Presse*, No. 12, An. 10 (1930).

Figure 3. Bronze ritual vessel *gui*, Late Western Zhou dynasty, 9th century BC. Bronze, H. 14 cm, W. 30 cm. Originally Josef Martínek's collection, now the National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vp 2662. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See plate 6, p. 245)

specialised shop selling the Art of China and Japan, and some of which were originally purchased by the National Masaryk Fund established by President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk,[41] also eventually became housed in the future NGP (fig. 3).

THE ASIAN COLLECTIONS UNDER THE POWER OF NAZI PROPAGANDA

During the period of the Second World War, when the Czech Lands were under the rule of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (1939–1945), exhibitions of Japanese art from the state collections of Bohemian and Moravian museums served the purposes of showcasing friendly German-Japanese relations. Let

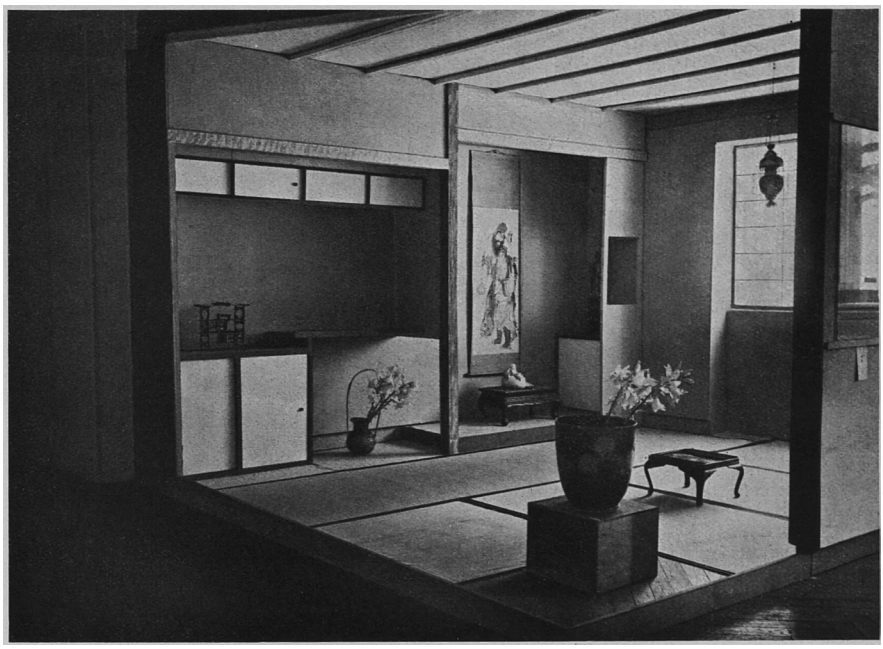

Figure 4. Photo from the installation of the exhibition of the *Art and Art Industry in Japan* exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague in 1943. *Umění*, An. 15, no. 1-2 (1943).

Figure 5. *Actor Segawa Kikunojo III in the Role of Oshizu, the Wife of Tanabe Bunzo* by Toshusai Sharaku, 1794. Woodblock print *Nishiki-e*, 33.7 × 23.5 cm. Originally from the collection of Wakai Kenzaburo, T. Straus-Negbaur, E. and F. Portheim, and Graphische Sammlung, now the National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 100. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See plate 7, p. 246)

us present as an example the exhibition of the *Art and Art Industry in Japan* exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague in 1943 (fig. 4) which was employed as part of the propaganda policy of the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and had to be prepared in accordance with the orders of the office of the Reich Protector in Bohemia and Moravia.[42] The exhibition displayed the collections of Graphische Sammlung (fig. 5),[43] the Náprstek Museum, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, the Waldes Museum and a few private collectors.[44] Joe Hloucha's original collection of Japanese art, which was eventually purchased in 1942 by the Náprstek Museum, happened to be displayed at this exhibition. Exhibitions of Japanese art were thus to present 'a striking testimony to the high standard of Japanese creative activity and to the spirit that governs the entire Japanese nation, a faithful friend and ally of the Reich in our common struggle,' as this official formulation of the Czech Press Agency was stated in a series of newspapers.[45]

POST-WAR TRANSPORTS AND THE PROGRAMME OF CENTRALISING MONUMENTS

During the post-war confiscation of the property of the German Reich or private individuals of German and Hungarian nationality within the territory of Czechoslovakia, transports of artistic objects took place, including works of Asian provenance, under the supervision of the National Cultural Commission.[46] After 1948, when the communist government took power, these were joined also by artefacts from confiscated and forfeited estates.

In 1951 the Oriental Institute launched negotiations at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture concerning the establishment of an institution 'which would concentrate our monuments of the fine arts of oriental cultures, attend to their scientific processing and sorting, their study and publication.'[47]

The proposal to assign the Asian art collections of the NGP to the Náprstek Museum was rejected on the grounds that the museum should focus on ethnographic tasks. A valid ideological argument, which was supported by both the academic community of orientalists, headed by professors Jaroslav Průšek and Vincenc

Lesný, and by art historians headed by the director of the NGP Vladimír Novotný, was an assessment of the artistic monuments of Asian cultures from the perspective of their equal status alongside European art, which have their rightful place in the NGP. This mission was eventually realised during the tenure of the first head of the Department of Oriental Art, Lubor Hájek (1921–2000), in the years 1952–1986.

As Hájek later commented, the proposal for the establishment of an institution that would collect, study, and provide access to oriental art had already been tabled in 1950 by professor Průšek.[48] In addition, Hájek recalled the fact that the first working editorial office of the journal *Nový Orient* (New Orient), of which he was a founder member and also editor-in-chief after the 2nd issue of the first year,[49] had been established shortly after the liberation in May 1945.[50] He considered it important to establish a science of the arts of 'oriental' cultures within the framework of oriental studies as a separate discipline, and also within the journal *Nový Orient*, where disputes ensued concerning the 'focus of the journal; pressure for the expansion of the political-propaganda function of the magazine; professional disputes […].'[51]

Among other things, Hájek based his argument upon the programme of state cultural policy, interlaced with the rhetoric of the time:

> [Art history, author's note] is a question of support for the liberation struggles of colonised nations and support for the emancipation of the nations of the East. However, the strongest argument in favour of the establishment of such an institution was the founding of the People's Republic of China, which has become one of the most important pillars in the peaceful bloc of people's democracies.[52]

Another no less important and practical reason for the establishment of a new Department of Oriental Art at the NGP was the fact that the ministry had legitimised the concept of concentrating artworks of Asian provenance from private collections of confiscated property estates within the NGP.[53] In fact, a series of confiscated artworks were also transferred to other museum institutions, including the Náprstek Museum and the Museum of Decorative Arts.

In addition to the organised transports, another auspicious factor was the successful purchase of works from prestigious private collections dating from the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic, connected in particular with the names of Joe Hloucha, Josef Martínek and Vojtěch Chytil,[54] all of whom were members of the Oriental Institute.[55] Hloucha also became a member of the advisory group for the collecting activity of the newly established Department of Oriental Art, which was headed by Lubor Hájek. A no less fundamental task was that of establishing an academic discipline for the study of collections of Asian art, supported not only by orientalists but also by the community of art historians.

THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN A COMPLICATED NETWORK OF CULTURAL POLITICS

The starting point for an objective evaluation of the intentions of political power and actual practice is de facto the individual strategy of a historian in response to the commands of the ruling power.[56] Hájek's primary task in his capacity as the head of the Department of Oriental Art, designated by ministerial decree, consisted in compiling an inventory of the oriental artistic monuments deposited in its warehouses.[57] These were mostly located in the North Bohemian châteaux of Sychrov, Hrubý Rohozec and Mnichovo Hradiště, and in Moravia in the châteaux of Lednice, Buchlovice, Jaroměřice nad Rokytnou and Vranov. During the years 1952–1953 he therefore compiled an inventory of approximately 6,000 items, of which he earmarked approximately 500 artistic objects for transfer to the collection in the NGP. In the following years, certain sets of Asian art were also transferred from collections of museums and institutions, including the Oriental Institute, Prague Castle, Charles University, and the North Bohemian Museum in Liberec.[58]

It was a certain paradox that the planned programme of permanently exhibiting the amassed artistic monuments of Asian provenance could not be implemented primarily due to insufficient financial resources. The planned exhibition of Chinese art at the Troja château, which was intended to demonstrate the ideological

Figure 6. Photo from the installation of *Chinese Art*, Kinský Palace, June 1954–February 1955. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, Documentation of the NGP exhibitions (1945–1958), inv. no. 183. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

propaganda of cultural relations with China, ultimately had to be installed within the framework of the temporary exhibition of Chinese art at the Kinský Palace in 1954 (fig. 6). On the occasion of the exhibition opening, Hájek formulated the objectives of the Department of Oriental Art at the NGP within the official rhetoric of the cultural-political propaganda – 'to provide access to the artistic wealth of the great cultures of Asia, above all the culture of our brother nation China, and to intensify friendly bonds with the nations of the East'[59] – though without any tangible result in the form of a permanent display of the Asian art collection.

The NGP also collaborated on exhibitions held by other institutions, headed by the Náprstek Museum in Prague. In the autumn of 1955, the museum prepared the exhibition *Unknown Tibet*, which aimed to present a unique collection of photographic images and film documenting the construction of the mountain highway to Tibet, obtained by two members of the army film crew, director Vladimír Sís and cameraman Josef Vaniš,[60] who in 1954 were the first travellers from Europe to go there after the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950. At the same time, the exhibition aimed to present the 'first overview of all the available Tibetan material in our country',[61] with the organisers applying for loans both from the museum and from private collectors, for example from the art historian Václav Vilém Štech (1885–1974) (fig. 7). Štech became a source of professional support for Hájek, not only for new acquisitions as a member of the purchasing commission at the NGP, but also for the promotion of Asian art in publications (see below). In addition to the traditional art of Tibet and photographic material from Sís and Vaniš, the exhibition also provided space for the media promotion of official political-economic interests: both the technical accomplishments of the Chinese project for the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet Highway from Xikang to Lhasa and the Czechoslovak motorcycle Jawa, manufactured by the Motokov company.[62]

Even Czechoslovak Communist Party voices occasionally noted the apparent deviation from the original conception of the NGP exhibition of oriental art. On the occasion of the congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 1956, for example, attention was drawn to the significance of Chinese culture, with a call for art historians to focus greater attention on the study and interpretation of the artistic values of artworks from the oriental world, including the provision of access to the collection of oriental artefacts

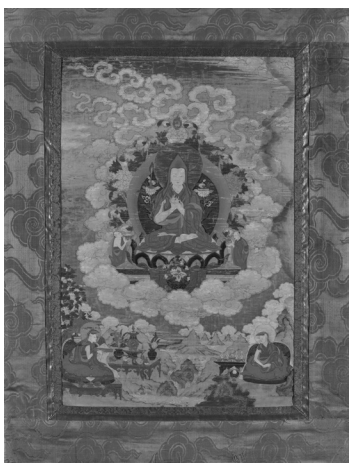

Figure 7. *Tsongkhapa*, Tibet, 2nd half of the 19th century. Colours and gold on canvas, 63.5 × 43 cm. Originally V. V. Štech's collection, now the National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 6023. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See plate 8, p. 247)

located here.[63] Of course, this rhetoric at the same time provided a background also for dramatically presented propaganda of the socialist Eastern bloc, directed against the colonialism of the Western superpowers:

> It is truly breathtaking when one considers that a country which only a few years ago liberated itself from the yoke of the colonisers, this enormous state – the largest in the world in terms of its population – is already sending forth such spiritual powers that shine as a beacon, illuminating the pathway to the future for all the oppressed nations of Asia and Africa. […] And one cannot even imagine what wealth of wisdom and culture the other nations of Asia and Africa shall send forth once they liberate themselves from colonial oppression and embark upon a similar path. […] The history of art and scientific aesthetics are finding ever deeper connections between the cultures of Europe and Asia. […] And if Marxism-Leninism is the culmination of all European culture, the roots of which reach back to antiquity, then antiquity shows us its connections with the Orient.[64]

Hájek, nevertheless, made use of this polemic in order to draw attention once again to the programme of the Department of Oriental Art. In 1957, in the pages of *Nový Orient* magazine, he referenced earlier art historical studies on the significance of the art of Asian cultures (especially the Middle East),[65] but concentrated the main focus on the stagnant state and the passive approach of the ministry in addressing the situation concerning providing access to the collection in a permanent exhibition.[66]

> Today the situation is such that the Oriental Department of the National Gallery has two professionals, one office, an insufficient depositary on the outskirts of Prague, no exhibition halls and several thousand exhibits in its collection, which though fragmentary, in terms of its quality form a quite solid foundation.[67]

Moreover, the department was struggling with understaffing in combination with a rapid increase in publication and exhibition responsibilities. As Hájek commented,

> If only a few years ago this mostly concerned events inspired by the official cultural policy, we can now observe how interest in oriental art is spreading to all strata of society, and that the tasks assigned to the Oriental Department of the National Gallery are spontaneously growing out of this new soil.[68]

THE PROMOTION OF ASIAN ART

From the second half of the 1950s, Hájek therefore organised not only exhibitions of Chinese art, which acquiesced to the official propagandistic programme, but also exhibitions focused on other Asian countries, which were held in the NGP or within the limits of institutional co-operation.[69] For example, these included the exhibition *Hokusai and His School* in the hall of the Purkyně Association of Artists in Prague,[70] in which he welcomed collaboration with the First Czechoslovak Republic collector Joe Hloucha, who loaned works from his collection to the exhibition.[71] Hloucha, who, among other roles, served on the purchasing commission of the Department of Oriental Art, then published a volume on Hokusai in English via the Artia publisher, which specialised in foreign distribution.[72] In 1960, Hájek organised another exhibition on Hokusai, this time within the premises of the Kinský Palace.[73] Concurrently, he prepared the exhibition *Indian Sculpture* (featuring artistic photographs and small sculptures) in 1955, and *Classic and Contemporary Indian Fine Art* at the turn of 1956, by which he de facto opened a platform for contemporary artists from India (see also the articles by Z. Klimtová and S. Wille in this publication). Hájek organised the first of the monographic exhibitions of contemporary artists on Slovanský Island in Prague in July 1955, presenting the work of the Indian painter Ram Kumar (1924–2018).[74]

Hájek realised that any lasting art historical interest in Asian art would require the engagement not only of art historians and collectors, but also artists,[75] whom he endeavoured to engage in publishing and exhibiting activities. He was aware that the standard of expertise was not everything. His interest lay in applying the Panofsky iconological method in order to evaluate the significance and original context of an artwork, and to identify the correlations between a work and its social context. Although he attended lectures in art history and classical archaeology at Charles University with professors Oldřich Blažíček (Proseminar of Art History), Jaroslav Pešina (Byzantine Art), Antonín Matějček (Art History seminar), Jindřich Čadík (Greek Art) and Bedřich Svoboda (Classical Archaeology proseminar),[76] Hájek approached the formulation of an art historical methodology rather unsystematically, and as a result his analyses frequently create a fragmentary impression as a certain 'antithesis of a scientific history of art'.[77] A certain role-model for Hájek in a methodological approach was the art historian Václav Vilém Štech, who during the inter-war period held a position in the cultural department of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment (MŠANO), in charge of the cultural agenda, and later from the 1930s as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. In his emphasis on the intuitive experience and perception of a work of art, Štech succeeded not only in providing an erudite analysis of the work, but also in identifying its purpose and aesthetic function. He also approached Asian art, with which he was less familiar, in this manner.

In the second half of the 1950s, Hájek edited the two-volume publication *Umění čtyř světadílů z českých sbírek mimoevropského umění* (The Art of Four Continents

from Czech Collections of Non-European Art) for the foreign distribution of the Artia publisher,[78] which was published in several foreign languages: German,[79] French,[80] English,[81] Italian,[82] Spanish[83] and Finnish.[84] In addition to Štech, who wrote the introductory text, Hájek invited a number of other collaborators to work on the publication, including not only orientalists but also artists such as the photographers Werner and Bedřich Forman, Norberd Frýd, the writers and collectors Joe Hloucha and Adolf Hoffmeister, the scholar of Indonesia Miroslav Oplt, the ethnographer of South American Indian tribes Václav Šolc, and the Egyptologist professor Zbyněk Žába. Hájek's ability to present themes and exhibitions of Asian art to a wider audience was not limited to the journal *Nový Orient* and its later English version *New Orient Bimonthly* (1960–1968), targeted at foreign readers. He found a publication platform also in the academic periodicals *Výtvarné umění*, *Tvorba* (journal for criticism and art), and even in the pages of the army magazine *Československý voják*.[85] He opened the weekly *Kultura* in 1959 in a special appendix devoted to the cultural-political theme of the cultures of the East.[86] Under the influence of the critical stance of the socialist bloc towards colonial domination in Asia and Africa, the term Orient represented the colonial expansion of the Western capitalist powers, and now appeared outdated.[87] The aim was therefore to arrive at a new conception of this theme in a debate with experts from the cultural sphere, expressing it through the question *Does 'oriental culture' exist?*[88] The debate among orientalists, art historians, and artists ultimately reached a consensus that the term 'oriental culture' was a vague and meaningless construct (Lubor Hájek, the architect Václav Hilský, the art historian and director of the Collection of Modern Art at the NGP Jan Marius Tomeš). The Indologist Dušan Zbavitel contemplated the meaning of the word 'oriental' from the perspective of its use which automatically evokes the meaning of 'foreign', thus something far removed from our comprehension and taste: 'Instead of common traits and features we emphasise peculiarities and differences, […] we should not take the word oriental in a qualifying sense, as a synonym for remoteness and foreignness.'[89]

And Adolf Hoffmeister added that the expression 'oriental culture' was also problematic, because it does not express cultural diversity.

It was therefore a certain paradox that the term 'oriental' persisted in the official title of the collection department throughout Hájek's entire tenure as head of the Collection of Oriental Art.

THE TRAGIC CHAPTER OF THE 1960S

In addition to a relaxation of social relations, the 1960s also finally brought the possibility of displaying Asian collections in a permanent exhibition. After ten years of its existence in the NGP, in 1961 the collection department succeeded in opening the permanent exhibition *Masterpieces of Chinese Art* at the château in Benešov nad Ploučnicí.[90]

A review of the exhibition was written by an equally respected figure from the community of Czech art historians, V. V. Štech (fig. 8), who expressed his aesthetic feelings and impressions of Chinese fine art:

> In every piece, the style resonates as an intensive relationship to work, an inner respect for the world and for life. The paintings are the product of long observation and a sum of experiences. […] Small, everyday life is linked together with a fantasy of monsters, dragons and celestial guardians perched on rooftops, […] We feel that this great work has grown out of a different concept of time than that which has governed Western art. Statues of the Buddha exist and operate outside of time. Through their silence, they comment on our restlessness and haste.[91]

Hájek conceived the installation in co-operation with Czech artists as a specific *Gesamtkunstwerk*. For the architectural design he invited collaboration from the artist Květa Horáková (1927–1981), who accentuated the economy of the installation with the aid of lightweight glass display cases and separately placed exhibits, which appeared to be levitating on metal rods (fig. 9). The author of the design of the promotional graphic prints was the artist Václav Rykr (1927–1991). Hájek was

Figure 8. Václav Vilém Štech at the storage of the château in Benešov and Ploučnicí on 19 August 1960. Archive of Masaryk Institute and Archive of Czech Academy of Sciences, fonds: V. V. Štech. Photograph © Archive of Masaryk Institute and Archive of Czech Academy of Sciences.

Figure 9. Photo from the installation of *Masterpieces of Chinese Art*, the château in Benešov nad Ploučnicí, 1961–1969. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, Documentation of the NGP exhibitions (1959–1964), inv. no. 165. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

suitably proud of this artistically conceived installation, which he also declared in *New Orient Bimonthly*:

> The conception underlying the exhibition is not to crowd the area and not to weigh down the installation furniture. Thus they succeeded in utilising the artistic qualities of the space itself, to the same degree as the Chinese exhibits. […] Pursuing the aesthetic aspect rather than the didactic approach (which is traditionally used in museums) brought good result. The visitor does not mind that the beauty of the European Renaissance construction speaks to him along with the beauty of the ancient relics of Chinese art; their combination seems to enhance aesthetic receptivity and create an unexpected harmony.[92]

This exhibition was meant to be followed by an additional installation of Asian art in the upper château, which unfortunately was never realised. On 19 December 1969 a fire at the château destroyed more than 2,000 artistic objects,[93] marking a culmination of the national tragedy following the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The subsequent period of stagnation was foreshadowed also by the announcement of the discontinuation of the *New Orient Bimonthly*:

> Due to the generally known tragic events in our country, beginning with August 21st 1968, the regular publication of our international journal has become impossible. In this situation, the editorial board has decided to discontinue the production of New Orient Bimonthly immediately. We hope that our friends all over the world will understand.[94]

Hájek's interdisciplinary interest in the art of Asian cultures was founded upon a need to understand artistic expressions within a horizontal perspective, i.e. to conceive of the history of art from a global as well as contemporary perspective. His relationship towards the contemporary art world both in this country and abroad, which he developed both through publications and exhibitions, remained his motto throughout his subsequent years at the NGP.

NOTES

* This article was supported by a NGP's Grant for the Long-Term Conceptual Development of a Research Organisation of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. It develops the paper delivered at the conference *Collecting Asian Art in Prague: Cultural Politics and Transcontinental Networks in 20th-Century Central Europe* held in the National Gallery in Prague on June 17–18, 2021.

1. On the relationship of the academic history of art and institutional practice in post-war Czechoslovakia see, e.g., Lucie Storchová et al., *Koncepty a dějiny: proměny pojmů v současné historické vědě* (Prague: Scriptorium, 2014), Milena Bartlová, *Dějiny českých dějin umění 1945-1969: dějiny umění slouží vědě o člověku* (Prague: UMPRUM, 2020).
2. Today's Collection of Asian Art. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: National Gallery (1945–1958), Collection of the Oriental Department, Ministry of Education, Science and Art Decree of 16 November 1951 on the Establishment of the Oriental Department at the National Gallery in Prague, ref. no. 142.477/51-V/2.
3. The museum was originally established as the Czech Industrial Museum in Prague in 1874. Today it bears the title of the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures of the National Museum in Prague.
4. Museum für angewandte Kunst (Museum of Applied Arts).
5. Today, the museum is a part of the Moravian Gallery in Brno.
6. As early as 1880, the museum obtained Chinese porcelains as a donation from Vojtěch Lanna, and in 1885, it made substantial acquisitions of Chinese and Japanese art of all types. See Emanuel Poche, 'Sbírky umělecké výroby orientální', in *Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze, k 70. výročí založení ústavu*, (Prague: Čedok Publishing House, 1955), 255–282.
7. The period of the 'First Czechoslovak Republic' refers to the inter-war period of the independent Czechoslovak state (1918–1938) before its occupation by Nazi Germany. The president during this period was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937).
8. For more on this topic, see Adéla Jůnová Macková and Libor Jůn, eds., *Czechoslovakia in the Orient: The Orient in Czechoslovakia 1918–1938* (Prague: Masaryk Institute and Archive, Czech Academy of Sciences, 2022).
9. For more on the subject of non-colonial colonialism in relation to the Czech Lands, see Sarah Lemmen, 'Noncolonial Orientalism? Czech Travel Writing on Africa and Asia around 1918,' in *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: from Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. James R. Hodkinson, John Walker, Shaswati Mazumdar, Johannes Feichtinger (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2013), 209–227; Markéta Křížová and Jitka Malečková, eds., *Central Europe and the Non-European World in the Long 19th Century* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2022) 25, 69.
10. *Masarykův slovník naučný – lidová encyklopedie všeobecných vědomostí* (Prague: Československý Kompas, 1931), 394.
11. In 1933, the Japanese Section was formed as part of the Oriental Institute (*Toyo kyokai nichi bunka kyokai* 東洋協会日致文化協会), Archive of Masaryk Institute and Archive of Czech Academy of Sciences, fonds: the Czechoslovak-Japanese Society, Japanese Section, Reports on Activities 1935–1938.

12. The Oriental Institute was founded in 1922 by the Law on the Oriental and Slavic Institute, Collection of Laws and Regulations, no. 27/1922 of 25 January 1922.
13. Alois Musil, 'Naše úkoly v orientalistice a v Orientě', *Naše doba* [Our Time] XXVII, (1920): 176–182, 270–281.
14. At the end of the First World War, Japan became an important destination for Czechoslovak legions returning from battles in eastern Russia via the Trans-Siberian route, where they could board ship to return to their homeland. For more on the subject, see, e.g., Susumu Nagayo, 'Pobyt Milana Rastislava Štefánika v Japonsku (Spring 1918)', *Historický časopis* [Historical Journal], Historický ústav SAV, No. 2, (1993): 161–170. The legionnaires' representation in Tokyo was established in November 1918, headed by the charge d'affairs Václav Němec. Official diplomatic relations commenced with the establishment of the Czechoslovak embassy in Tokyo on 12 January 1920, with its first ambassador Karel Pergler (in the years 1920–1921).
15. Gerolf Coudenhove-Kalergi (1896–1978) was the son of an Austrian diplomat and a Japanese mother, Mitsuko. Thanks to his language skills and legal education, he was employed as a secretary at the Japanese embassy in Prague, and during the war also as a lecturer in Japanese language at the German University and the Oriental Institute, where he founded the Japanese Section (1933).
16. The exhibition with 1,220 Asian and African items from Hloucha's collection was held from 22 November 1929 till 16 February 1930. *Výstava mimoevropského umění a uměleckého průmyslu* [The Exhibition of Art and the Art Industry from Outside Europe] (1929), (exh. cat).
17. Joe Hloucha (1881–1952) found fame especially as an author of literary Japonaiserie, of which his debut *Sakura ve vichřici* [Sakura in the Tempest], written in 1905, brought him unprecedented acclaim and the resources for his first journey to Japan.
18. 'Československý export si musí najíti cestu na Východ. Zahájení Hlouchovy výstavy mimoevropského umění' [Czechoslovak Exports Must Find a Path to the East. Opening of Hloucha's Exhibition of Art and the Art Industry from Outside Europe], *České slovo*, 24 November 1929. All the quotations in the text were translated from the Czech original.
19. Most of the artefacts from Africa were sold to foreign private and museum collections. Regarding the auction in Berlin, see the auction catalogue *Sammlung Joe Hloucha, Prag: Ostasien, Ozeanien, Afrika, japanische Graphik / Eingeleitet von L. Adam* [The Joe Hloucha Collection, Prague: East Asia, Oceania, Africa, Japanese Prints, with an introduction by L. Adam] (Berlin: Internationales Kunst- und Auktionshaus, 1930). For a review of the exhibition see e.g. *Pestrý týden*, 23 November 1929, 3; 30 November 1929, 5, and 7 December 1929, 7.
20. As many as 105 Japanese firms from the art export industry were presented. See, e.g., *Prager Presse*, 24 March 1930, 2.
21. '*It is now more than 30 years* [1898, author's note] *since I commenced my collecting activity, for the purpose of which I have embarked upon several grand and expensive study journeys to the most remote parts of the world, in which I of course focused mainly on the Japanese islands, which I visited several times for a longer period of time.*' Letter from Joe Hloucha addressed to the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment, October 1934, ar. Hloucha 2/5-1, Archive of Náprstek Museum.
22. The exhibition was opened on 22 November 1929.
23. Vincenc Kramář was a distinguished Czech historian and art theoretician, as well as an expert and collector, predominantly of cubist art.
24. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: Vincenc Kramář, confirmation from Joe Hloucha of the receipt of a cheque for 350,000 Czechoslovak crowns for eight works of art dated 27 April 1923.
25. Gesellschaft Patriotischer Kunstfreunde in Böhmen.
26. For further details on the provenance of the collections in the Museum Rietberg Zurich, see most recently Esther Tisa Francini and Sarah Csernay, eds., *Pathways of Art. How Objects Get to the Museum* (Zurich: Museum Rietberg and Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess AG, 2022).
27. Kramář's collection gained renown especially for its French art and Czech cubism. See, e.g., Alena Pomajzlová, 'Sbírka českého umění 19. a 20. století Vincence Kramáře' in *Od starých mistrů k Picassovi* (Prague: National Gallery in Prague, 2000).
28. This probably concerned a publication by Karl With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens aus der Sammlung Yi Yuan* (Basel: Schwabe, 1924).
29. 'Let me send you a catalogue of my collection of East Asian art as part of the same shipment. Some of the pieces are on loan in the East Asian Museum in Berlin, some are in my address above [in Ascona, Monte Verità, Switzerland], where I like to stay in the summer.' Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: Vincenc Kramář, Letter from Baron von der Heydt addressed to V. Kramář, dated 8 October 1928.
30. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: Vincenc Kramář, Letter from Hloucha dated 25 January 1930.
31. Ministerstvo školství a národní osvěty. The ministry was in charge of education and culture.

32. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: Vincenc Kramář, report from Dr V. Kramáře, *Deset let obrazárny*, manuscript, 23. 6. 1928; report to the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment, ref. no. 621-28, 28.11.1928; letter to the minister concerning the insufficient state subsidy dated 14 February 1930.
33. The purchase of the collection was eventually implemented as late as in 1942 for an estimated price from 1931 of the amount of 1,512,000 Czechoslovak crowns, letter from Náprstek Museum of General Ethnography in Prague addressed to Joe Hloucha, Archive of the Náprstek Museum, fonds: ar. Hloucha 2/5-4.
34. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: Society of Patriotic Friends of Art, letter from Vincenc Kramář addressed to MŠANO: Czechoslovak State Picture Gallery – Old Chinese Art from the Hloucha collection, dated 8 May 1931.
35. Markéta Hánová, 'Origins of the Collection of Asian Art at the National Gallery in Prague', *Bulletin of the National Gallery in Prague XXXI / 2021* (Prague: The National Gallery in Prague, 2021), 110-143.
36. Josef Martínek, 'Sběratelské zkušenosti', *Světozor – světová kronika současná slovem a obrazem. Časopis pro zábavu i poučení*, XXXII, no. 13, 31 December 1931, 211.
37. Josef Martínek, 'Sběratelské zkušenosti', *Světozor – světová kronika současná slovem a obrazem. Časopis pro zábavu i poučení*, XXXII, no. 13, 31 December 1931, 211.
38. The exhibition was held from 16 March to 1 May 1930. *Výstava starého čínského umění: kolekce J. Martínka* (*The Exhibition of Old Chinese Art: The Collection of J. Martínek*), exhibition catalogue, Trade Fair Palace in Prague VII, Prague 1930.
39. Thanks to a sponsor's donation from the banking house Petschek & spol., the Gutmann brothers and Jindřich Waldes, he purchased eight Chinese paintings and two sculptures. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art, letter no. 278 dated 13 May 1930.
40. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art, letter from Vincenc Kramář to the directorate of Živnostenská banka dated 21 July 1930, no. 531.
41. This concerned 22 Chinese paintings which were brought to the NGP from the collections of Prague Castle in 1953.
42. The exhibition was held from 25 February till 10 April 1943.
43. Hánová 2019, 107–111.
44. 'Výstava Umění a umělecký průmysl v Japonsku', *Umění* [Art] An. 15, no. 1-2 (1943): 73–74.
45. See 'Výstava japonského umění a průmyslu. Obraz duševních sil velkého národa', *Lidové noviny*, 27 February 1943. The quotation was translated from the Czech original.
46. For further details, see Kristina Kaplanová, *Archivní fond: Národní kulturní komise (1917–1954) – inventář* (Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, electronic document, Prague 2001).
47. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: National Gallery (1945–1958), Collection of Oriental Department, Lubor Hájek, concept No. 930/54 addressed to the Ministry of Culture.
48. Lubor Hájek, 'K organisaci a studiu orientálního umění', *Nový Orient* [The New Orient] XII, no. 2 (1957): 17.
49. Hájek was employed by Oriental Institute as editor of *Nový Orient* from 1 July 1945. Archive of the Masaryk Institute and Archive of Czech Academy of Sciences, fonds: Oriental Institute.
50. The first issue was published on 15 October 1945. 'Kdo a kdy navrhl založení Nového Orientu?', *Nový Orient* [The New Orient] L, no. 5 (1995): 199.
51. 'Nový Orient před 25 lety (Beseda se zakládajícími členy redakce NO: dr. Luborem Hájkem, CSs., dr. Zdeňkem Hrdličkou a dr. Miloslavem Krásou),' *Nový Orient* [The New Orient], no. 5 (1970): 130.
52. Hájek, Concept, report for the Ministry of Culture, ref. no. 930/54, 1954, Archive of NGP, fonds: Collection of Asian art. Hájek published the content of the concept in the article 'K organisaci a studiu orientálního umění', *Nový Orient* [The New Orient] XII, no. 2 (1957): 17-18.
53. Markéta Hánová, 'The Collection of Asian Art in the National Gallery in Prague: The Concept of Generosity in the Development of the Japanese Art Collection and in the Iconography of Japanese Buddhism' in *Generosity: The Art of Giving: White Rabbit – the Companion*, eds. Adam Budak, Michaela Pejčochová (Prague: National Gallery in Prague, 2016), 66–71.
54. For more on Chytil's role in collecting Chinese art, see Michaela Pejčochová's contribution to this volume.
55. Hloucha was appointed an executive member of the cultural department in 1934, Martínek became an executive member of the economic department in 1932, and Chytil was appointed an executive member of the cultural department in 1929. *Věstník Orientálního ústavu v Praze za desetiletí 1828–1938*, Prague 1938, Archive of Masaryk Institute and Archive of Czech Academy of Sciences, fonds: Oriental Institute.
56. For further details on the academic regime in post-war Czechoslovakia, see Jakub Jareš et al., *Mezi konkurencí a spoluprací: Univerzita Karlova a Československá akademie věd 1945-1969* (Prague: Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2018).

57. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, fonds: National Gallery (1945–1958), Collection of Oriental Department, decree of MŠVU ref. no. 67570/52–VIII/7 dated 21 July 1952.
58. Hánová 2016, see note 53.
59. Lubor Hájek, 'K instalaci čínské výstavy' ['On the Installation of a Chinese Exhibition'], *Výtvarná práce* [Visual Artwork] II, no. 1 (2 July 1954): 10.
60. Vladimír Sís (1925–2001) and Josef Vaniš (1927–2009).
61. See letter addressed to Dr V. V. Štech by the Náprstek Museum dated 15 October 1955, ref. no. 676/1955, Archive of Masaryk Institute and Archive of Czech Academy of Sciences, fonds: V. V. Štech. Today only two Buddhist paintings from Tibet and Mongolia – *thangkas* – have been preserved from his collection in the NGP (inventory nos. Vm 6022, Vm 6023), which was purchased by the NGP in 1987 from Štech's niece Jana Farková.
62. *Cesta do Tibetu. Přímým přenosem z Náprstkova musea*, reportage by Czechoslovak Television, directed by Svatopluk Studený, October 2, 1956, see Československý rozhlas a televise, no. 40, 1 October 1956.
63. Václav Pekárek, 'Čínská kultura,' *Literární noviny, Týdeník pro kulturně politické a umělecké otázky*, no. 41 (1956), 1–2.
64. Václav Pekárek, 'Čínská kultura,' *Literární noviny, Týdeník pro kulturně politické a umělecké otázky*, no. 41 (1956): 1. The quotation was translated from the Czech original.
65. Miroslav Tyrš, *O významu studia dějin starého umění orientálního* (1883) and Otakar Hostinský, *O pokroku v umění* (1894).
66. Lubor Hájek, 'K organisaci a studiu orientálního umění,' *Nový Orient* [The New Orient] XII, no. 2 (1957): 17-18.
67. Lubor Hájek, 'K organisaci a studiu orientálního umění', *Nový Orient* [The New Orient] XII, no. 2 (1957): 17. The quotation was translated from the Czech original.
68. Lubor Hájek, 'K organisaci a studiu orientálního umění', *Nový Orient* [The New Orient] XII, no. 2 (1957): 17. The quotation was translated from the Czech original.
69. Helena Obrová, ed., *Inventory of exhibitions 1945–1985* (Prague: National Gallery in Prague, 1989).
70. *Hokusai a jeho žáci*, exhibition catalogue (Prague: Purkyně Association of Artists, 1954). The exhibition was held from 22 September to 14 November 1954 in the exhibition hall Salon výtvarné dílo – S. V. Purkyně in Prague.
71. In 1949, Hloucha published the first Czech written monograph on Hokusai, which he accompanied with reproductions of works from his collection.
72. Joe Hloucha, *Hokusai: The Man Mad-on-Drawing* (Prague: Artia, 1955).
73. Markéta Hánová, *Japanese Woodblock Prints and Collectors in the Czech Lands* (Prague: National Gallery in Prague, 2019), 209.
74. 'Indický malíř Rám Kumár', *Svobodné slovo*, 28 July 1955.
75. Jiří Roubík and Emil Filla, 'Mluvili jsme s Emilem Fillou o orientálním umění', *Nový Orient* [The New Orient] no. 2 (1945–1946): 7–8.
76. Letter from Hájek addressed to Director Lesný asking him for permission to attend lectures as an Oriental Institute employee, dated 22 March 1950, Archive of Masaryk Institute and Archive of Czech Academy of Sciences, fonds: Oriental Institute.
77. Hájek graduated from the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague, specialising in Indology and Comparative Religious Studies. Ladislav Kesner, ed., *Lubor Hájek: Západ slunce na moři* (Prague: H&H Vyšehradská, s. r. o. and National Gallery in Prague, 2009), 22-26.
78. Stanislava Mouchová, *Bücherverzeichnis 1953-1966, Artia Verlag Prag* (Prague: Artia, 1968), 56-59, 68, 91-93.
79. *Kunst ferner Länder. Ägypten – Afrika – Amerika – Ozeanien – Indonesien* (Prag: Artia Verlag 1956, 1958), *Kunst ferner Länder. Vorderasien – Indien – Tibet – China – Japan – Tschuktschen* (Halbinsel, 1957, 1959).
80. *L'Art des pays lointains. Egypte – Afrique – Amérique – Océanie – Indonésie*, 1956, 1959. *L'Art des pays lointains. Asie antérieure – Inde – Indochine – Tibet – China – Japan – Tchouktches*, 1957, 1959.
81. *Exotic Art. Egypt – Africa – America – Oceania – Indonesia*, Spring Books, London 1956, 1958. *Art of Far Lands* (London: Spring Books, 1957).
82. *L'Arte dei paesi lontani, Egitto – Africa – America – Oceania – Indonesia,* 1958. *L'Arte dei paesi lontani. Asia anteriore – India – Indocina – Tibet – Cina – Giappone – Ciukci*, 1959.
83. *El arte de los anitiquos y de los primitivos. Egipto – Africa – América – Oceanía – Indonesia* (Mexico: Editorial Hermes) 1963. *El arte de los anitiquos y de los primitivos. Asia anterior – India – Indochina – Tibet – China – Japón – los Tchuktches* (Mexico: Editorial Hermes), 1963.
84. *Kaukomaiden taidetta. Egypti – Afrikka – Amerikka – Oseaania – Indonesia*, Werner Söderström (Helsinki, 1960). *Kaukomaiden taidetta. Etu-Aasia – Intia – Tiibetti – Kiina – Japani – Tšuktšien niemimaa* (Helsinki: Werner Söderström), 1959.
85. L. Hájek, 'Stařec posedlý malováním', *Československý voják*, IX, no. 21, 1960: 25.

86. *Kultura. Týdeník pro otázky kultury a umění*, III, no. 42, 22 October 1959.
87. Jaroslav Průšek, 'Orient, orientalistika a poznání východních zemí', *Kultura. Týdeník pro otázky kultury a umění*, no. 42 (1959): 3.
88. 'Existuje orientální kultura?' *Kultura*, no. 42 (1959): 4-5.
89. 'Existuje orientální kultura?' *Kultura*, no. 42 (1959): 5. The quotation was translated from the Czech original.
90. Hánová 2021, see note 35.
91. V. V. Štech, 'Výtvarné skvosty do pohraničí', *Literární noviny, Týdeník pro kulturně politické a umělecké otázky*, no. 22 (1961): 6. The quotation was translated from the Czech original.
92. Lubor Hájek, 'Chinese Art in a Renaissance Castle', *New Orient Bimonthly. Journal for the Modern and Ancient Cultures of Asia and Africa*, Vol. 2, no. 5 (October 1961): 152. See also 'Czech Castle – Chinese Art', *Oriental Art*, Vol. IX, no. 4 (Winter 1963): 216.
93. Hánová 2021, see note 35.
94. Dušan Zbavitel, ed., *New Orient Bimonthly*, Vol. 7, no. 5 (October 1968): 160.

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‘I HAVE SHOWN YOU JAPAN …’[1] FELIKS JASIEŃSKI AND JAPANESE ART COLLECTIONS IN POLAND

Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik

The first monographic exhibition of Japanese art in Poland was opened in Warsaw on 14 February 1901. Its initiator and curator, Feliks Jasieński (1861–1929)[2] (fig. 1), who supplied works to be shown from his collection, wrote about preparing the Warsaw public for the event, at the same time explaining his intentions:

> Reflection on Japanese art and history should be of tremendous pedagogical importance to us, who until now have been unable to create anything that is truly ours. We have Polish artists, but no Polish art. A nation can only produce its own art when it has its own national style […] What we have to realise is that the Japanese exist because they are Japanese. So let us learn from the Japanese how to be Poles.[3]

The outstanding collector and future donor of the National Museum in Kraków summarised in this way the assumptions and objectives of the new artistic current, which, to a large extent thanks to him, was reaching Poland. Japonisme arrived there more than thirty years after the first major presentations of Japanese art in London, Paris, and Vienna.

Figure 1. *Portrait of Feliks Jasieński* by Leon Wyczółkowski. 1911. Pastel on paper. National Museum in Kraków (from Jasieński’s collection). (See plate 9, p. 248)

Deprived of a state Poles did not participate in the 1880s diplomatic missions and the signing of treaties

'opening' Japan to the West. Among the members of official delegations as well as Austrian and Russian scientific expeditions, however, there were also scholars from Poland such as biologist and zoologist Szymon Syrski, ethnographer Jan Kubary, botanist Hugo Zapałowicz, and geographer Eugeniusz Romer.[4] There was also another special 'Polish path', running through Siberia, towards the northern end of the Japanese archipelago, through which the Russians sent deportees, such as participants of Polish national movements. This was the route taken by exiles, the most famous being Bronisław Piłsudski, the future explorer of the Ainu, and Wacław Sieroszewski, writer and author of popular books about Japan, who brought back a small collection of artworks from his year-and-a-half-long expedition. Art historian and collector Count Karol Lanckoroński and princes Witold Kazimierz and Adam Ludwik Czartoryski went to Japan as part of round-the-world expeditions fashionable at the time. In January 1892 in Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine), Count Paweł Sapieha showed his collection from a trip he had made accompanied by Rüdiger Biegeleben, the Austrian envoy to China and Japan.

Industrialist and political and philanthropic activist Stanisław Glezmer, working in Petersburg, travelled to East Asia to study the circumstances of the success of modernisation in the Meiji Empire.[5] Upon his return, he rebuilt his palace in Strugi (near Warsaw), erecting a special Japanese pavilion, the only example of Japonising architecture in Poland (fig. 2). In it he placed his collection, mostly works of craft, acquired during the voyage. After his death it was gifted to the National Museum in Warsaw (where the majority of the collection was lost during the Second World War).[6]

It was from these individuals' travel memoirs and the increasing number of press reports from abroad that more detailed knowledge was drawn about the exotic 'Land of Mikado', whose suggestive image, though far from real, was imposed by Arthur Sullivan's and William Gilbert's operetta (1885), popular in Poland. For the average Pole, however, Japan still remained too distant to arouse more than passing interest. Deeper understanding and knowledge was still to come, though the long process of discovery was begun by the Russo-Japanese War. Japan was also more of an economic or political model than an artistic one.[7]

The Polish public first became acquainted with Japanese art a little earlier, thanks to exhibitions organised by Jasieński starting in 1901. His first 'performance' at the Society for

Figure 2. Stanislaw Glezmer's Japanese pavilion, Strugi (near Warsaw), after 1908. Colour photograph. Photo Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik (See plate 10, p. 248)

the Encouragement of Fine Arts (Zachęta) was a typical case of succès de scandale: a provocation designed to draw attention to a new artistic phenomenon, which would otherwise have no chance of being noticed by the ordinary viewer of culture. An earlier exhibition of Sapieha's collection, as well as a commercial presentation of Ukiyo-e prints, from Siegfried Bing's collection, organised in 1900 in Aleksander Krywult's salon in Warsaw, passed pretty much unnoticed. Even the second exhibition, which was to mark the occasion of Ignacy Matuszewski's publication of the first monographic article devoted to Japanese painting,[8] did not attract any attention from the general public, despite clear interest from critics.

Feliks Jasieński, the culprit of this artistic scandal, having returned to Warsaw after several years in Paris, was already the author of a book entitled *Manggha. Promenades à travers le monde, l'art et les idées* (in honour of Hokusai)[9] and the music critic of the newly established literary and arts magazine *Chimera*, the cradle of Polish symbolism. He presented Japanese works of art that he had gathered in France to astonished Varsovians. Together with the rest of his collection, these artworks were to be transferred, as stated by Jasieński, 'to the museum which must be created here […] Without such a permanent museum of art, there can be no question of developing artistic taste among the general public and, consequently, of creating a national art'.[10]

He confirmed his intentions in a declaration inscribed in his copy of the auction catalogue of the Goncourt brothers' collection of Far Eastern art (1897), placed significantly on the back of the title page, symmetrically to the facsimile of the famous testament of Edmond de Goncourt on the next page. Unlike Goncourt, who decided to disperse his collection and use the money he obtained to found a literary award, Jasieński gave his collection to the Polish nation:

> It is my wish that this modest nucleus of a collection of Japanese arts – the most original, audacious, and refined art ever – should become the property of my country and be transformed into a free-of-charge museum so that art lovers yet to be born may come to experience the most exquisite sensations that art can provide and keep a grateful memory of the first Polish Japoniste.[11]

The Japanese exhibition was organised on Jasieński's initiative, and at his own expense, at the most prestigious venue possible: the newly inaugurated building of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, the only Polish artistic institution in the territories of the Russian Partition. It lasted two months and was the first exhibition of its kind in Poland, covering all areas of Japanese art. The exhibition was his first attempt – and the model for all Jasieński's future 'artistic actions', where the presentation of objects from his collection was always accompanied by lectures and press publications. Jasieński was personally responsible for all the preparations, from the general concept to the smallest technical details. Before the inauguration, he published a series of articles devoted to Japanese art and its influence on the development of the Polish artistic school.[12]

As reported in the newspapers, the exhibition showed

> about a thousand items, representing, in various sizes and outlines, Japanese art, from the beginning of the twelfth to the middle of the last century. […] The glass showcases contain around five hundred sabre guards […], a collection of dagger handles […] A serious sizeable part is occupied by bronzes […], vases […], incense boxes, candlesticks, plants, animals, etc. This section includes enamelled wares […] The collection of lacquerware includes small boxes [inrō] worn by Japanese women, combs, and hair pins […]. In this section we include related sculptures made of wood, such as Buddha statues and models of theatre masks made of ivory. […] The centre of the exhibition hall is occupied by a large collection of colour woodcuts, including the so-called *surimono*, printed only in one or a few copies.[13]

Critics underlined the high value of the presented artworks, which were displayed in chronological order 'so that they may give a full picture of the development of the art of this people from the Far Eastern reaches and teach our society to navigate its artistic output'.[14] Though, as was noted, the lack of space prevented the full realisation of 'didactical aims' and the presentation of the whole collection, its owner 'faithful to his role of propagator of Japanese curio, not only spares no hints and gladly shares his knowledge […] but also he did not hide his treasures but is ready to place them in the hands of anyone, who has interest in the matters of art'.[15]

The exhibition drew large crowds – it was visited by nearly eight thousand people. The audience was both intrigued and shocked by the new artistic proposal and, above all, by the atmosphere of scandal and provocation accompanying the event. Jasieński, prone to violent reactions, responded to the criticism of and disrespect for Japan's artistic achievements with an open attack on his opponents, reminding the audience that they not only deliberately distorted the names of Ukiyo-e masters to make them sound as if they were in operettas such as *Mikado* or *Geisha* but also compared 'Japanese art to packages of Chinese tea'.[16] On the cover of the album in which he later kept *surimono*, he placed an inscription: 'Not for cattle' in order to protect them from viewers who are incapable of appreciating their full artistic value.

In his polemical passion Jasieński went as far as proving Kuniyoshi's superiority over Jan Matejko, the most outstanding Polish historical painter.[17] Even worse, at the same moment, he published an critical obituary about the realist painter Wojciech Gerson, an opponent of new artistic currents, especially Impressionism, whose representatives the collector actively supported.[18] By attacking Gerson, the director of the Klasa Rysunkowa ('Drawing Class', the only art school in Warsaw) and chair of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, Jasieński was in fact challenging the entire official – conservative – artistic milieu of Warsaw. In the media storm which followed these publications, the collector's strongest supporters were the members of the circle of modernists gathered around *Chimera*. Its

editor, Zenon Przesmycki, prepared a long article presenting Ukiyo-e in the context of the history of Japanese art, referring to Western sources and supporting his arguments with examples from Jasieński's collection – Japanese woodblock prints from the collection, in lithographs by Polish artists, served as illustrations in subsequent issues of *Chimera*. It was the first serious study familiarising Polish readers with the outlines of this newly discovered artistic tradition. Not by accident, its publication coincided with the intensification of criticism surrounding the exhibition.[19]

Put off by the negative reception of his activities, Jasieński withdrew his promise to hand over the collection to the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts and decided to move it from Warsaw to Kraków. His apartment, on the second floor of a townhouse on the corner of Market Square, became an important point on the map of the artistic and spiritual capital of Poland, as Kraków was the seat of such important scientific and cultural institutions as the Jagiellonian University, the Academy of Fine Arts and the National Museum. While preparing for the move he presented his collection in the two most important cities of Galicia: Kraków at the turn of October and November 1901 and again in January 1902 as well as in Lwów in November and December 1901. This series of exhibitions was devoted to the graphic arts. In addition to Japanese woodblock prints, including Utamaro, Eishi, Shunsho, Eisan, Toyokuni, Hokusai, and Hiroshige, the collector presented works by Max Klinger and Henri Rivière, among others.

The reception was very warm, as was press commentary:

> The small, cramped space of the Lwów Society of Fine Arts was swarming with long unseen crowds. Every week the display changed, and every week Mister Jasieński was there to inaugurate it with fiery talks in which, meeting the public face to face, he explained his goal to free Poles from foreign influence so that they might develop, following the example of the Japanese, their own applied and pure art that might lay the foundations of national distinctiveness in all daily and exceptional needs.[20]

While closing the series with an exhibition which featured Ukiyo-e and paper stencils (*katagami*), parallel to the presentation of selected paintings by Polish artists from his collection, he donated a dozen Ukiyo-e to the National Museum in Kraków.[21]

In time Jasieński's Kraków apartment became the mecca of Polish lovers of Japanese art, as well as of artists and collectors. It was also a meeting place for local bohemians, the seat of 'the Club' founded by the collector to support the Society of Polish Artists '*Sztuka*' (Art) and, above all, by virtue of the collector's own request from 1903, granted in 1906, a new department of the National Museum in Kraków or, in short, the Feliks Jasieński Museum (fig. 3). The 'museum' was made up of a collection of contemporary Polish painting and sculpture, European and Polish graphic art, and decorative art that he had accumulated from

Figure 3. 'Feliks Jasieński's Museum'. Tadeusz Jabłoński Atelier, before 1914. Black-and-white photograph. National Museum in Kraków (from Jasieński's collection).

the 1880s. The Japanese collection, described in all articles devoted to 'the new museum institution of Kraków'[22] and shown at subsequent exhibitions, although still exotic for part of the public and the critics was its integral part – as Jasieński always stressed.

In 1904, at the *Prints Exhibition* organised in Kraków by the Polish Applied Arts Society, in the section of foreign prints – which came almost exclusively from Jasieński's book collection – he showed publications on Japanese art, magazines with Japanese graphic design, the magazine *Kokka*, and woodblock prints by Hokusai and Eishi.[23]

In 1906, to assert his donation and new role as curator of the 'Department' of the National Museum, Jasieński prepared a great presentation of Japanese art in the Palace of Art, the new seat of the Kraków Society of the Friends of Fine Arts. On this occasion he published the *Guide to the Japanese Department of the* [Jasieński] *Branch of the National Museum in Cracow*.[24] It was in fact a publication prepared with great care, detailing both the collection and history of Japanese art, its cover decorated with a reproduction of 'Suzuki Kiitsu's painting'. The screen titled *Flowers of the Four Seasons*, attributed today to Kikoku, Kiitsu's disciple, was one of the most famous works in his collection. The exhibition was very successful, although this time the earnings from ticket and catalogue sales did not cover the

organisation costs. 'The Japanese exhibition was visited by 4,000 people. I sold […] 200 elegantly published catalogues'[25] – commented the disappointed collector.

However, Jasieński did not give up his activities as art populariser and exhibition curator. A part of his Japanese arts and crafts collection, placed on deposit, was presented from 1906 in the Czapski Palace, a new department of the National Museum. In 1911 he published the second volume of *Manggha*, which also contained essays on Japanese art, in sections in Józef Rettinger's *Monthly Magazine of Literature and Art*, of which he was also the art editor.[26] He delivered, as a summary, a series of lectures based on fragments of *Manggha* at Kraków's City Theatre in November 1911, and once more in 1913 in Kraków and Kyiv, and in March 1914 in Warsaw. Each time the series began with a speech on Hokusai, entitled *The Rembrandt of the Far East*.

He did all this without abandoning his goal of bestowing the Japanese, as well as the Polish and European works of art, upon the nation. On 11 March 1920 Jasieński, finally, signed the act of donation of his collection to the National Museum in Kraków. He inaugurated the new chapter of his activity by preparing a great exhibition of Japanese art, opening a few days later in the Palace of Art, the seat of the Society of the Friends of Fine Arts. The exhibition, warmly received by critics, attracted crowds of visitors interested in Japan or lured by echoes of the stormy, almost twenty-year-long negotiations between the city authorities, the museum owner, and the collector. The latter, as was his custom, published an article in the press before the opening, explaining the objectives of the exhibition.[27] He also delivered 'a lecture on Japanese art, supported by items of the magnificent exhibition currently held in the rooms of the Palace of Art'.[28] The Japanese exhibition was accompanied by a presentation of the Polish part of his collection in the main gallery of the National Museum. The inaugural cycle was crowned by an exhibition of textiles, opened in the Czapski Palace, department of the museum. The collector presented 'masterpieces of drawing, colour, and composition', examples of two complementary oriental aesthetic systems: so-called Polish sashes, Eastern rugs, batiks, Chinese and Japanese silks and embroideries, and obi belts.[29] The choice of these particular fragments of the collection was not accidental: Jasieński wanted to emphasise once again that 'there is only one art', encompassing painting, sculpture, and decorative arts, and harmoniously combining the Western tradition with the artistic output of the Middle and Far East.

The last project in Jasieński's long curatorial career – his artistic testament – was a double exhibition of Japanese art, at the turn of 1923 and 1924, in the National Museum. The first presented Ukiyo-e by Hiroshige; the second, Utamaro, Hokusai, and Kuniyoshi. Visitors could also admire selected examples of decorative Japanese art: lacquerware, inro (including those decorated by Korin), and netsuke.[30]

The collector did not live to see the creation of the new department of the museum bearing his name, as outlined in the act of donation. He died in his apartment, on 6 April 1929, surrounded by works of art that he had bequeathed to the city. By delaying the opening of the Jasieński Department, National Museum in

Kraków allowed itself to be overtaken by the Greater Poland Museum in Poznań where there had been a permanent gallery of Oriental Decorative Arts (Chinese, Japanese, Turkish, and Persian) since 1924. The first of its kind in Poland, it was situated in two rooms on the ground floor of the museum building.[31] The gallery was created following the success of an exhibition of Japanese, Chinese, and East Asian art, at the turn of 1922 and 1923 – one of the most popular temporary exhibitions organised by the museum in the interwar period, it was visited by over eighteen thousand people.[32] It was born from a wave of compassion brought about after a great earthquake shook the Japanese islands, and it was based on the donation of sixty-six works, gifted a year earlier to the museum by Leon Wyczółkowski, a painter and Jasieński's closest friend.[33] Apart from objects from the museum's collection, the exhibition also showed more than four hundred works on loan from private collections from Greater Poland: Ukiyo-e, militaria, lacquerware, bronzes, ceramics, and textiles.

The grand opening of the Feliks Jasieński Department of the National Museum in Kraków took place on 28 December 1934 in the Szołayski house. The works on display included contemporary Polish paintings, kakemono, sculptures, selected militaria, and 'several works by the most famous Japanese master painter Hokusai'[34] – a preview of the 'Japanese department' which Feliks Jasieński had dreamed of and strived to create for nearly thirty years.

From 1901 Jasieński systematically presented Japanese art to the Polish public, being the only one to do so. Apart from those organised by Jasienski, there were only two other exhibitions of Japanese art during this period.

The first one was an exhibition of fifty works of oriental ceramics from Henryk Grohman's collection, held in June 1911 in Zakopane, taking the opportunity of an exhibition of graphic arts, accompanying a graphic arts competition of which he was the founder. Just like Jasieński, Grohman strove to equate the position of decorative arts and graphic arts with that of painting and sculpture:

> a range of kilims from local workshops with exquisite examples of ceramics Korean, Japanese, Chinese as well as those of contemporary English and French origin from the collection of Mister Grohman gave the exhibition room the look of real culture and thought that art, as we understood it, does not only consist of oil painting that one can be a great artist of vast culture and talent, and not paint, that not only paintings are artworks but so are carpets, not only can one seek lines and atmosphere in frames on the wall but in the pan as well, that no borders exist between applied art and pure art, there are only different materials, that the artists manipulate.[35]

Two years later, in January 1913, the Society of the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Warsaw hosted an exhibition of works by the contemporary Japanese artist Wakana Utagawa, which was, as noted by critics, a further manifestation of the interest awoken by Jasieński, 'the Japanese from Kraków'.[36]

There is no doubt, however, that the collector found the greatest number of followers among painters, representatives of 'Young Poland', considered to be the first Polish avant-garde. For his part, Jasieński consciously stimulated and developed the Japanese passion as well as an understanding of Japanese art in his artist friends, sharing with them not only his knowledge but also his contacts in the milieu of art dealers. His collection was always open to them, the works it contained were often recorded on canvas, and Jasieński himself willingly posed for portraits 'en collectionneur'. He gifted those interested with doubles of woodblock prints, or he exchanged Japanese curio for works for his collection of Polish art. In this way, he developed the Japanese collections of his friends Wyczółkowski, Józef Pankiewicz, Józef Mehoffer, and Wojciech Weiss. Pankiewicz's collection was destroyed during the war, Wyczółkowski donated his to the Great Poland (today National Museum) in Poznań, and Mehoffer gave part of his to the National Museum in Kraków. The remainder of it, just as Weiss's collection, are in the hands of the artist's families. A great deal has already been written about their collections and their Japanese-inspired work.[37]

The story of the 'Japanese fever' of the painter Stanisław Dębicki from Lwów and the fate of his collection, second only to Jasieński's, is still shrouded in mystery (fig. 4). It is only known that during his stay in Paris in 1890–1891, he established 'personal and very cordial relations with Japanese artists'.[38] Who these friends were and whether their circle included Seiki Kuroda, one of the most important representatives of the *Yoga* current (Western-style painting), who, like the Polish painter, studied at the Académie Colarossi, is difficult to determine without further research.

In any case, Dębicki returned from France as an expert in Japanese art, and the contacts he made in Paris allowed him, as the only collector in Poland at that time, to enrich the collection of Ukiyo-e brought from France with others, imported directly from Japan with the help of a specialised local agent. Jasieński, with whom Dębicki was in constant contact, also used his assistance. Dębicki was also a link between the circles of 'Japanophiles' in Lwów and Vienna.[39] Some of the works from his collection passed into Jasieński's hands; the rest was probably dispersed.

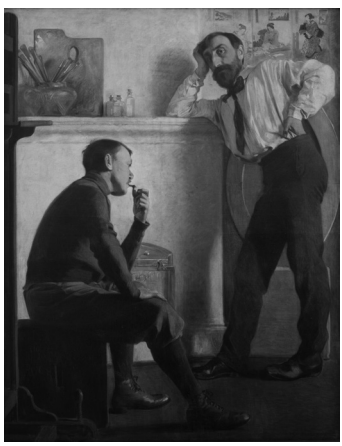

Figure 4. *Portraits of Stanisław Dębicki and Damazy Kotowski* by Stanisław Dębicki and Damazy Kotowski. 1893. Oil on canvas. National Museum in Kraków. (See plate 11, p. 249)

Both the Jasieński and Dębicki collections with 'Parisian' roots, although not comparable in size, had one thing in common: they were dominated by Ukiyo-e prints. Dębicki's much smaller collection was limited to them. Jasieński's collection consisted of over 6,500

items – three quarters of which were woodblock prints, nearly two thirds of which were landscape pictures, with three hundred plates and forty-seven albums by Hokusai and nearly two thousand by Hiroshige.[40] Japanese art collections of French artists had a similar structure – especially those of Henri Rivière, Claude Monet, and Theo Van Gogh, who mainly collected images of beauties and landscapes, and Auguste Rodin, who preferred portraits of actors.[41]

The graphic arts–oriented collections of Jasieński and Dębicki were thus fundamentally different from the collections of members of the Warsaw and Łódź bourgeoisie, headed by the aforementioned Grohman, which consisted mostly of decorative arts.[42] Undoubtedly reflecting the growing interest in Japan, the latter did not influence the development of Polish Japonisme. On the contrary, Jasieński's collection became the living centre of dialogue with Japanese art in Poland. Studying the Ukiyo-e collected by him, Polish painters and graphic artists sought to be inspired, to have their artistic choices confirmed, to deepen their knowledge, and then to creatively transform the principles of the Japanese aesthetics. Thanks to the collector's popularisation activities, interest in this art, so recently completely unknown in Poland, started to spread in ever larger circles.

It is worth emphasising that from the very beginning, Jasieński wanted to include his Japanese collection in the National Museum and not in the Museum of Decorative Arts or the Museum of Oriental Art, which was an exception rather than the rule if compared with the fate of other private Asian art collections in Europe, like those of Emile Guimet, Ferenc Hopp, or Vojta Náprstek. Jasieński considered Japanese woodblock prints, paintings, sculptures, lacquerware, and textiles an integral part of a bigger whole, encompassing Polish painting and sculpture as well as Polish and European graphic and decorative arts, equally worthy to be placed in 'the sanctuary' of Polish culture which was – supposed to be – the National Museum in Kraków. The fact that this was not an opinion shared by the municipal authorities responsible for the museum was the main reason why his battle for donation lasted so long.

The Jasieński Department was closed down after the Second World War, and his collecting achievements were almost forgotten (fig. 5). Thereafter, the Japanese collection was presented only at temporary exhibitions, mostly in Poland and in Japan. A renaissance of interest in Japanese art came at the end of the twentieth century and was associated, once again, with the collector. The Manggha Centre of Japanese Art and Technology in Kraków was opened in 1994. The initiative came from the world-famous film director Andrzej Wajda. Its building was designed by the Japanese Pritzker-winning architect Arata Isozaki, whose work, though rooted in Japanese tradition, is open to other cultures and forms a bridge between East and West. The Centre started as a branch of the National Museum, implementing Jasieński's ideas and presenting his collection, although it later transformed into an independent museum, where his collection was deposited. Its selected fragments are presented in temporary exhibitions organised by the Manggha Museum and the National Museum in Kraków.

Figure 5. National Museum in Kraków, Feliks Jasieński Department. 1934. Black-and-white photograph. Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe.

The first decades of the twenty-first century saw a number of exhibitions on Japanese art organised by other Polish museums, including the exhibition *Masterpieces of Japanese Art in Polish Collections*, organised in 2014 by the Manggha Museum and the National Museum in Warsaw.[43] Private collectors, Jasieński's successors, such as Jerzy Leskowicz, whose collection exhibited in Warsaw in 2017, Kyoto and Aix-en-Provence in 2019, and at the Cernuschi Museum in Paris in 2020,[44] are following in his footsteps, recalling the intercultural dialogue Jasieński began in 1901: 'I have shown you Japan so that you may learn to think of Poland as, for two thousand years, those artists have thought of Japan in Japanese'.[45]

NOTES

1. Feliks Jasieński, 'Z deszczu pod rynnę' ['From Rain under the Gutter'], *Ilustracja Polska* [Polish Illustration], no. 5 (1901): 90.
2. About Jasieński, see Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik, *Feliks 'Manggha' Jasieński i jego kolekcja w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie / Feliks 'Manggha' Jasieński and His Collection at the National Museum in Krakow* (Kraków: National Museum in Kraków, 2014).
3. Feliks Jasieński, 'Przed I-szą wystawą sztuki japońskiej' ['Before the First Exhibition of Japanese Art'], *Kurier Warszawski* [The Warsaw Courier], no. 43 (1901), 1.
4. For more about the discovery of Japan in Poland, see Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik, *Japonia w kulturze i sztuce polskiej końca XIX i początków XX wieku* [Japan in Polish Culture and Art at the End of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Century] (Warsaw and Toruń: Polish Institute of World Art Studies and Tako Publishing House, 2016).

5. Stanisław Glezmer, *Впечатления, соображения и выводы С. П. Глезмера … по поводу его поездки в 1909 году по дальнему востоку* (*Манджурии, Китаю, Кореи и Японии*), *29 ноября 1909 г.ф.* [Impressions, Reflections and Conclusions of S. P. Glezmer …. on his 1909 trip to the far east (Manjuria, China, Korea and Japan), 29 November 1909] (St. Petersburg: [by the author, 1910]).
6. Stanisław Glezmer, *Katalog przedmiotów znajdujących się w 'Pawilonie japońskim' w Strugach Ziemi Sochaczewskiej, 1909–1914* [Catalogue of objects housed in the 'Japanese Pavilion' in Strugi in the Sochaczew County, 1909-1914] (Warsaw: [by the author, 1914]).
7. For more about the background to this, see Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik, "'Yellow Peril, Bright Future": Visual Arts and the Changing Perception of Japan in West and East Europe', in *Japonisme in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy*, ed. Mirjam Dénes, Györgyi Fajcsák, Piotr Spławski, and Toshio Watanabe (Budapest: Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts, 2020), 261–275.
8. Ignacy Matuszewski, 'Malarstwo japońskie', *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, no. 49 (1900): 970–972.
9. Félix [Feliks Jasieński], *Manggha. Promenades à travers le monde, l'art et les idées* [Manggha. Strolls through the world, art and ideas] (Warsaw and Paris: F. Vieweg and J. Fiszer, 1901).
10. Feliks Jasieński, quoted in: Püssari-Watàn, 'U autora Mangghi' ['At the author of Manggha'], *Życie I Sztuka*, [Life and Art], supplement to *Kraj* [The Country], no. 28 (1901): 322.
11. Feliks Jasieński, [handwritten note], in *Objets d'art japonais et chinois, Peintures, estampes composant la collection de Goncourt dont la vente aura lieu Hôtel Drouot* (…) *1897* (…), Paris 1897, on the reverse of the title page, National Museum in Kraków Library no. III 672.
12. Feliks Jasieński, Przed I-szą wystawą sztuki japońskiej, ['Before the First Exhibition of Japanese Art.'], *Kurier Warszawski* ['The Warsaw Courier], 1901, no. 43: 1; no. 44: 2; no. 45: 1–2.
13. 'Wystawa sztuki japońskiej' ['Exhibition of Japanese Art'], *Kurier Warszawski*, 1901, no. 45 (morning edition), 1.
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NETWORKS OF ENTHUSIASM FOR JAPAN

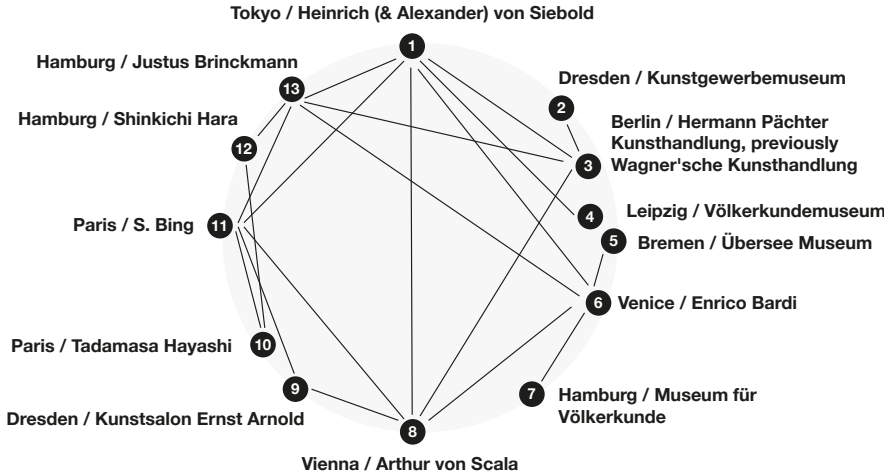
Johannes Wieninger

STARTING WITH THE WORLD FAIRS

Although there is no clear, general way to explain how currents and movements come about within art history, they all have one thing in common: people are always the ones who set movements in motion, who live their interests and enthusiasm and inspire others. This contribution retraces personal networks that have emerged through friendships, passions, and shared business interests. Unlike most nineteenth-century relationships between European and non-European countries, the connection with Japan was less sustained by colonial aspiration. A kind of 'common sense' was the basis for close cooperation and contacts across borders.

Looking at 'Japonisme', one of the first international, transcontinental art movements in the nineteenth century, the connections between political interests, personal preferences, and business acumen can be shown across borders – a 'network of art' that covered the European continent (fig. 1). A brief look at the history of East–West relations brings us back to 1853. Even if Japan was not isolated from the rest of the world for centuries, as is often claimed, this date marks a turning point in Japanese history. Because of the entry of a US gunboat under Commander Perry into the Bay of Edo, the country was forced to undertake long-discussed changes in politics and economy. It took Western countries as an example for individual steps, and it even invited 'advisers' into the country. This approach was not without controversy, because it brought revolutionary changes in social and cultural spheres of life with it.

Diplomatic missions were opened in the new capital, and Rutherford Alcock (1809–1879), the first British consul, arrived in Edo as early as 1859. Parallel to his diplomatic and economic duties, Alcock also dedicated himself to exploring the country and started collecting artefacts in the hopes of representing this distant country's culture and way of life in Europe.[1] In 1862 parts of his collection were shown at the London Exhibition – to the great horror of a Japanese delegation that visited this show. The Japan Exhibition at the Paris world fair in 1867 was supported by the lords of Satsuma and Nabeshima; this was the first self-portrayal of Japan, although not yet official.[2]



1 **Tokyo / Heinrich von Siebold** (1852–1908), second son of Philipp Franz von Siebold, brother of Alexander von Siebold (1846–1911).
Since 1872 with the Austro-Hungarian Legation in Tokyo.
1873: Translator at the Vienna world Fair
1889: His collections were presented to the Naturhistorisches Museum, now at the Weltmuseum (Museum of Ethnology).
1892/ 1905: Donations to the Oriental Museum and the Museum for Art and Industry, now MAK-Museum of Applied Art in Vienna.
1893: Consultant for the collection of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand.
1889: Consultant for the Baldi collection in Venice.
Wanted to sell his Katagami collection to the Völkerkundemuseum in Leipzig.

2 **Dresden / Kunstgewerbemuseum**
1889: Purchase of the Katagami collection for 2400 Mark from Wagner'sche Kunsthandlung Berlin, probably acquired from Alexander von Siebold (1846–1911).

3 **Berlin / Kunsthandlung Hermann Pächter** (1839–1902), previously Wagner'sche Kunsthandlung.

4 **Leipzig / Völkerkundemuseum**
1908: Wanted to buy a Katagami collection from Heinrich von Siebold, later sold by Trau, Vienna.

5 **Bremen / Übersee Museum**
1907–08: Hugo H. Schauinsland, the founding director of the Übersee Museum Bremen, started a fund raising campaign in Bremen to buy parts of the Bourbon Bardi collection.

6 **Venice / Enrico Bardi** (1851–1905)
1889: Acquired his collection in Japan.
1906: Auctions by Trau Vienna.
1908: Description of the collection in five volumes of hand-written catalogues by Justus Brinkmann, compiled, with assistance of Shinkichi Hara.

7 **Hamburg / Museum für Völkerkunde**
1908: Director Thilenius acquired eighty-one lots (some of them containing up to 38 objects) from the Bardi collection.

8 **Vienna / Arthur von Scala** (1845–1909)
1868–1871: Taking part in the Austro-Hungarian expedition to East Asia.
1873: Secretary of the Oriental Committee at the Vienna World Fair.
1874–1897: Founding Director of the Oriental Museum (later Trade Museum).
1897–1908: Director of the Museum for Art and Industry.

9 **Dresden / Kunstsalon Ernst Arnold**
Since 1893 showing contemporary art.
1895: Exhibition Japanischer Holzschnitte 17. – 19. Jahrhundert organized by S. Bing.

10 **Paris / Tadamasa Hayashi** (1853–1906)
1878: Arrives in Paris.
1894: Donates Tsuba collection to Musée du Louvre for its Extrême-Orient section.
1900: General commissioner of the Japanese art section at the World 's Fair in Paris.
Trading and selling Ukiyo-e worldwide.

11 **Paris / S. Bing** (1838–1905)
1854: Arrives in Paris.
1888–1891: Publisher of *Le Japon artistique*.
1895: Exhibition Japanischer Holzschnitte 17. – 19. Jahrhundert at Kunstsalon Ernst Arnold, Dresden.
1895–1904: Maison de l'Art Nouveau.
1901: Specialausstellung Hokusai in k.k. Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie, Vienna.

12 **Hamburg / Shinkichi Hara** (1868–1934)
1896: Assistant of Justus Brinckmann.
1902: Publication of *Die Meister Der Japanischen Schwertzierathen* with Brinckmann.

13 **Hamburg / Justus Brinckmann** (1843–1915)
1873: Expert at the Vienna World Fair.
1885 and 1900: Juror at the World Fairs in Antwerp and Paris.
1874: Founder of Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg.
Since 1883: Purchases from S. Bing in Paris and R. Wagner'sche Kunsthandlung in Berlin.
1888 - 1891: Publication of *Japanischer Formenschatz* with S. Bing.
1902: Publication of *Die Meister der Japanischen Schwertzierathen* with Shinkichi Hara.
1908: Description of the Bardi collection in five volumes of hand-written catalogues, with assistance of Shinkichi Hara.

Figure 1. The Japan network of art. Illustration by the author.

It was only after the country's transition from shogunate to monarchy in 1868 that the Japanese government began to organise presentations on an international level itself. When Japan was invited to take part in the Vienna world fair, hectic preparations began, with European consultants asked to select the products to be shown. The German engineer Gottfried Wagener (1831–1892) had been in Japan as an economic adviser, primarily on the modernisation of the porcelain industry, since 1868. He oversaw the Japanese exhibition at the Vienna world fair, and above all, his advice not to conform to Western tastes led to the success of this first state-controlled presentation.[3]

TRADING AND COLLECTING

Japan had pushed itself into the consciousness of the West and, as a result, began a targeted cultural policy: the country exported arts and crafts, promoted handicrafts, and participated in as many international exhibitions as possible. In addition to the world exhibitions, which were taking place increasingly frequently, there were many small competitions in which Japanese artists took part and from which they brought home medals of honour for their achievements and ambition. The *Internationale Ausstellung von Arbeiten aus edlen Metallen und Legirungen* (International Exhibition of Works Made of Precious Metals and Alloys) in Nuremberg in 1885 is one example of this increased presence of Japanese art and artists on the international stage.[4] Ninety-six (!) Japanese artists, craftspeople, and manufacturers are listed by name in the exhibition catalogue. Leopold Gmelin, professor at the Munich School of Applied Arts, describes them with great enthusiasm: 'The bronze works exhibited by the Japanese in the modern department are so perfect beyond all definitions, especially technically, that their works have to be called the highlight of the exhibition'.[5]

FROM TOKYO TO VIENNA, BERLIN, AND DRESDEN

At that time, in the 1880s, two 'Japan-friendly' centres had already emerged, Vienna and Paris. Museums and public collections as well as trade fairs and galleries were active and cooperative in the promotion of Japanese arts and crafts on the world stage. Starting with the Vienna world fair in 1873, European collectors began to establish or strengthen their collections of Japanese objects. Particularly noteworthy among these collectors are the brothers Alexander and Heinrich von Siebold, who – encouraged and influenced by their father, Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866) – worked in the diplomatic services in Japan and became important personalities in collecting and trading. Alexander (1846–1911) is best known as a diplomat at the British Legation and later in the service of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

His younger brother, Heinrich (1852–1908), initially worked as an interpreter at the Austro-Hungarian Legation in Tokyo; he was also available as an interpreter for the Japanese delegation at the Vienna world fair and played a decisive role in the dedication of objects and works of art to European museums. To the displeasure of his superiors, Heinrich ran an art business in Tokyo and 'supplied' many travellers to Japan with souvenirs and works of art. He was also active as a companion on trips through the country and thus promoted the emergence of extensive Japanese collections in Europe. Heinrich also used his contacts in the highest circles to build an eminent collection, which he dedicated in several tranches to Viennese museums and as individual objects to other collections in the German-speaking area.

Throughout their careers, the Siebold brothers, along with numerous other actors in the interconnected 'Japan network', contributed to Asian art collections throughout Europe, including in Vienna, Berlin, and Dresden.

In 1889 Heinrich dedicated an extensive ethnographic collection to the newly founded Natural History Museum in Vienna, which – in accordance with the attitude at the time – also included an ethnographic department, which later became one of the fundaments of the Museum für Völkerkunde (Museum of Ethnology), today's Weltmuseum Wien, founded in 1928.[6]

Heinrich had been in contact with Arthur Scala (1845–1909), the director of the Oriental Museum (Orientalisches Museum) in Vienna, which was renamed Trade Museum (Handelsmuseum) in 1886. Scala took part in the imperial Austro-Hungarian expedition to India, China, Siam, and Japan; was secretary of the committee for the Orient and East Asia during the Vienna world fair; and in 1874 became the founding director of the Oriental Museum. It was also through personal connections that Heinrich made an important dedication to the Trade Museum in 1892; his contribution still constitutes one of the largest Japanese collections in Europe.

Of the many objects in the Trade Museum that came from Heinrich, one group stands out: shrine fragments from the burial complex of the Tokugawa shoguns around the Zojoji in Shiba/Tokyo. Even in Japan these objects would be a sensation: these fragments are the only remains of the cemetery, which was destroyed in 1923 and 1945. The two representations of the lions (*shishi*) from the memorial shrine built around 1710 can be attributed to Kano Tsunenobu (1636–1713) (fig. 2).

Figure 2. *Shishi* (Lion) attributed to Kano Tsunenobu (1636–1713). Edo period, ca. 1710. Colour and gold on wood. Part of a Tokugawa Memorial Shrine in Shiba (Edo/Tokyo). Courtesy of MAK – Museum of Applied Art, Vienna, inv. no. OR 3930–2. Collection Heinrich von Siebold. (See plate 12, p. 250)

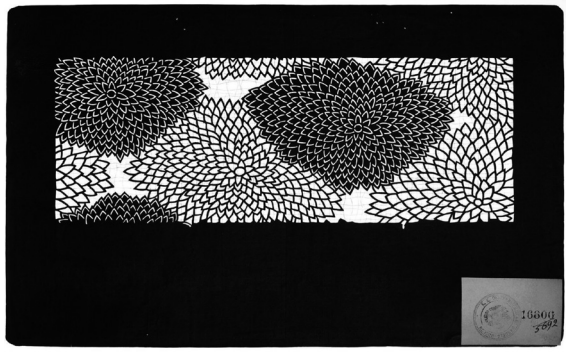


Figure 3. Katagami. Edo period, nineteenth century. Paper cut-out. Image courtesy of MAK –Museum of Applied Art, Vienna, inv. no. OR 3925–5692. Collection Heinrich von Siebold. (See plate 13, p. 251)

Two other groups of objects in the Viennese collections illustrate the international connections of the Siebold brothers. A large collection of more than 2,700 ink paintings gives insight into the iconography of East Asian painting and shows striking parallels to a similar collection – that of Erwin Baelz (1849–1913), which is kept in the Linden-Museum Stuttgart.[7] The second group of objects concerns the collection of approximately nine thousand Japanese stencils (*katagami*) (fig. 3).

The Kunstgewerbemuseum in Dresden acquired a much larger collection in 1889 from the art dealer R. Wagner in Berlin.[8] Research by Wolfgang Scheppe, curator of the 2014 exhibition *The Logic of Rain* in the Japanese Palais in Dresden, revealed the likelihood that these more than sixteen thousand *katagami* found their way to Europe via Alexander von Siebold (personal information).[9]

With the dissolution of the Vienna Trade Museum in 1907, Scala transferred a significant portion of the Siebold collection to the Museum of Art and Industry, of which he had become the director.[10]

Another art enthusiast that Heinrich von Siebold advised was Enrico Bardi (1851–1905). From 1887 to 1889, Bardi travelled through East Asia, including a six-month stay in Japan, which was long enough for Bardi to accumulate a palace-filling collection. Some of Bardi's collection has been lost, but the rest still forms the core of the Museo d'arte orientale (Asian Art Museum) in Venice.[11] After Bardi's death, Justus Brinckmann (1843–1915), a museum director who was then active throughout Europe, prepared the estate catalogue.[12]

We already come across Brinckmann's name as a commissioner at the Vienna world fair in 1873, where he was able to establish many contacts with Hamburg: as early as 1874 he was the founding director of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe (Museum of Arts and Crafts) there. His contacts were not only related to Viennese museums and galleries, but he became a bridge builder between France and the German-speaking countries. The most important person for him was S. Bing (1838–1905).

PARIS, LONDON, AND HAMBURG: *LE JAPON ARTISTIQUE*

Bing, born in Hamburg, moved to Paris in 1854, where he ran the family business Bing et Renner. Connections to his brother-in-law's commercial activities in Tokyo and travel in 1880 and 1881 led Bing to import enormous amounts of Japanese objects and works of art; these activities led to the wide availability of Japanese objects in Europe, which contributed to continent-wide enthusiasm for Japan. Bing became an important supplier of Asian objects for major European museums, and his magazine, *Le japon artistique*, which he published simultaneously in three languages, became a first-class source of information for many artists, collectors, and art lovers. Together with Bing, Brinckmann was responsible for the German edition – *Der Japanische Formenschatz*.[13] As an editor, Brinckmann was Bing's partner; as a museum director, he was Bing's client. Bing provided the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg with numerous objects. Above all, the excellent collection of Japanese tea ceramics must be mentioned; Brinckmann acquired around 150 ceramics from Bing (fig. 4).[14]

Another person connected with Bing is Hayashi Tadamasa (1853–1906). Thanks to his knowledge of foreign languages, Hayashi came to Paris in 1878 as interpreter and translator for the Japanese art dealer Wakai Kenzaburo (1834–1908). He saw his future in Paris and set up his own business dealing in Japanese works of art. With his contacts with Parisian artists, Hayashi became a source of inspiration for Vincent van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, and many others. From the 1880s onwards, he ran his art trade, specialising in Ukiyo-e and handicrafts of other materials: coloured woodcuts of the highest quality marked with his stamp can be found in the most important collections worldwide. His importance and efficiency were also recognised by the Japanese government, and he was a commissioner for the Paris 1889 and Chicago 1893 world fairs before being appointed Commissioner-General of the Japanese Pavilion at the 1900 Paris world fair. Not only that: he became the editor of the first Japanese-authored art history of Japan published in a Western language.[15] No matter how honourable this task was, it was not very satisfying for Hayashi, who had to leave out the Japanese colour woodcuts; he wasn't even allowed to mention them because the Japanese government didn't want to be represented by pictures of actors and prostitutes. To get an impression of

Figure 4. Tea bowl, Black Raku ware. Edo period, seventeenth century. Image courtesy of Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, inv. no. 1901.271. (See plate 14, p. 251)

Hayashi's own collection and his 'commodities', consult the auction catalogues written by Bing.[16]

In addition to the objects, such as *katagami* and *sumie*, mainly collected by the art enthusiasts mentioned above, there is another group of objects that is kept in large numbers in almost all European collections: sword guards (*tsuba*), and it is precisely this type of object that leads us to London, Paris, Hamburg, and maybe Vienna. *Tsuba* were well known as early as at the London world fair in 1862, where the small metalwork objects attracted attention due to their colourful variations of metals, generating admiration for these attractive metalwork objects, which in the following years were exported to Europe in large numbers.

In 1894 Hayashi donated a considerable collection of *tsuba* to the Louvre, which – remarkably – was accompanied by a published catalogue.[17] Brinckmann also acquired many sword guards for the Museum of Arts and Crafts, and in 1896 he was able to engage Hara Shinkichi (1868–1934) to catalogue and publish them.[18] In the foreword to the publication, Hara outlines the origin of the objects and thus reveals a '*tsuba* network':

> The Vienna World Exhibition of 1873, where we laid the foundation for the Japanese collection of the Hamburg Museum of Arts and Crafts, did not offer any opportunity to purchase Japanese guard plates and sword ornaments. Only after the ban on carrying swords was issued in peacetime in 1876 did Japanese swords and their accessories reach Europe in larger numbers. The R. WAGNER'sche Kunsthandlung in Berlin brokered the first purchases for us at the beginning of the 1880s. Its recently deceased owner, Herr Hermann Paechter, subsequently rendered great service in supplying German collections with Japanese antiquities. A stay by the director in Paris in the autumn of 1883 opened up what was then the most important market for Japanese art. Mr S. Bing's action, conducted with as much expertise as taste, offered an exceedingly rich selection of sword ornaments, in addition to other actions existing at the time that have since been received as a result of a lack of supplies. To introduce the study of these, Mr S. Bing's exquisite personal collection was best suited, while the public museums in Paris did not then collect Japanese antiquities. On that occasion, Mr Tadamasa Hayashi proved to be a competent adviser for reading the artists' names and explaining the representations on the cover sheets, the same who later, when Mr Bing gave up his Japanese shop, devoted himself entirely to 'l'Art nouveau', to devote to the noblest dealings with Japanese antiquities, who became adviser to the most important Parisian collectors and completed his career in France as Imperial Japanese Government Commissioner for the World Exhibition of 1900.[19]

Again we encounter Wagner's art shop in Berlin, and once more connections to the Siebold brothers remain speculative. The Viennese collection of Heinrich von Siebold in the Museum of Applied Arts contains more than one hundred *tsuba*

(out of a total 480 *tsuba* at the Museum of Applied Arts). Hara's work is still relevant today, and it should be noted that large *tsuba* collections still lie dormant in storerooms around the world. Bing and Hayashi were also active in the exhibition business in the last decade of the nineteenth century; they made objects available, edited catalogues, and acted as consultants. Two exhibitions at prominent locations deserve special mention: an exhibition of Japanese colour woodcuts at the Art Salon Ernst Arnold in Dresden and an exhibition of Hokusai's works at the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna.[20]

Since 1893 the renowned gallery Art Salon Ernst Arnold in Dresden has focused its programme on contemporary art, so it is remarkable that in 1895 an exhibition of Japanese colour woodcuts was shown with the help of Bing.[21] Bing endowed this exhibition with first-class prints, and it seems as though museum directors and collectors made the pilgrimage to Dresden to buy from Arnold – and to make contacts. The Austrian Museum of Art and Industry acquired the complete album *Mirror of the New Beauty Contest of the Courtesans by Yoshiwara and Their Calligraphy*, made in 1784 by Kitao Masanobu, whose prints were all originally bound as leporello and in the best quality – a one-off but also very expensive acquisition.

Bing's connections to the Arnold Salon and its 'Japan programme' remained intact. Scala, who left the Trade Museum for the Museum of Art and Industry in 1897, invited the Arnold Salon to show works at a guest exhibition in Vienna. This was held in 1899, and the museum acquired twenty-six prints, including five with Hayashi's stamp! (In total, the Viennese museum acquired more than two hundred prints from the Art Salon Ernst Arnold.) In 1901 we meet Bing again: the largest exhibition of Hokusai's work to date took place in the Vienna Museum for Art and Industry, a sales exhibition organised by a Viennese art dealer where 630 works were exhibited. The foreword to the catalogue states: 'the lovable support that Mr S. Bing in Paris gave us through advice and the provision of the works we needed'.[22]

NETWORK ENDING

In the first decade of the twentieth century, this Japan network, which spanned the continent for twenty years, broke up. Heinrich von Siebold tried to sell the majority of the remainder of his collection, so he negotiated with the Ethnological Museum in Leipzig for the sale of twenty thousand *katagami*. Unfortunately it never came to that: he died in August 1908, and his collection was then sold in a sales campaign in Vienna.

His congenial Viennese partner Scala retired as museum director in 1909 and died just a few months later. Bardi, who died in 1905, was able to make his collection public in a Venetian palace. During the turmoil of war between 1914 and 1918, Bardi's collection became a subject of dispute between Italy and Austria. Luckily, large parts have been preserved in the Museo d'arte orientale in Venice.

In the same year, 1905, S. Bing died; he was the most important 'motor' of the Japan network, who infected all of Europe with his enthusiasm. After selling parts of his collection at the 1902 Paris auctions, Hayashi returned to Japan in 1905 with what remained of his collection. He died only a year later, but part of his collection found its way back to Europe: Otto Kümmel (1874–1952) became an assistant to Wilhelm Bode (1845–1929) in Berlin in 1906 and, from 1906 to 1909, went to Japan with Ernst Grosse (1862–1927), who was sent to acquire objects for the Berlin Asia Collection, which Bode also supported.

Correspondence between Grosse and Kümmel in the 1890s shows that Kümmel was already interested in Japanese art and that he had been to Paris, among other places, to study the market and its collections. With these two people a turning point in the approach to the art of East Asia, and Japan in particular, can be seen. One – Grosse – still had close contacts with Hayashi and Bing, so he was peripherally involved in the Japan network; the other – Kümmel – was a polyglot, and he was scientifically and museologically trained and interested. He preferred to explore the country himself and tried to build a collection systematically. In Japan they were fortunate to acquire for Berlin important pieces from the collection of the recently deceased Hayashi.[23] Brinckmann remained director of the Museum of Art and Industry in Hamburg until his death in 1915. He was the last major networker from the late nineteenth century, but the loss of his partners slowed his activities.

The time after the First World War was not only a major turning point in politics. Travel and direct contact over long distances became easier, and expeditions were equipped to explore and collect artworks and testimonies from distant countries. Interest in Japan waned, and museums and collectors turned to China's history and new archaeological discoveries. This development was summarised in the foreword of a Viennese exhibition catalogue in 1922:

> this overestimation of Japanese applied arts in the past few decades has of course not been surpassed in recent years, and people are now turning decisively from the Romans to the Greeks of the East. This is by no means intended to belittle Japan's contribution to East Asian art, but rather to put it in the right light.[24]

The network of enthusiasm for Japan in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Europe reveals that, during this time, a large number of works of art flowed from Japan and that the image of this East Asian country in the West has been shaped by this accumulation of Japanese works in Western collections at the turn of the twentieth century. Some of the protagonists – such as Hayashi or Alexander von Siebold – were able to work for both the Western and the Japanese side. Hayashi worked as an art dealer and as a Japanese commissioner at the Paris world fair, and Alexander von Siebold began his career in the service of the British, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian legations, but switched to the Japanese

government, among other things, to organise Japanese participation in world fairs and to renegotiate unequal treaties.

Although the West – above all the United States and Great Britain, although other states followed in these efforts – tried to establish a colonialist relationship in its trade policy with Japan, areas such as public administration and military affairs remained unaffected by these unequal agreements. Cultural exchange is never a one-way activity – especially the example of European–Japanese relationships can show intensive interactions. The building of rich collections went hand in hand with the interest of many artists in Japanese art, and at the same time a kind of parallel to Western Japonisme emerged in Japan itself: new Western themes and techniques changed the visual arts in Japan, and academic education split into two directions – Japanese (*Nihonga*) and Western painting (*Yoga*).[25]

As the twentieth century progressed, official Japan gradually decreased the system of European and US 'advisers and trainers', became more assertive internationally, and began to focus on inter-Asian politics. Of course, this also affected Japanese art and culture. The 'West' reoriented likewise: artistic and art historical interests shifted to China, South, and Southeast Asia.

Although I have begun to sketch the pan-European, even intercontinental cooperation in the collection of Asian art, this mapped network of Japanese enthusiasts in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century is not complete and needs to be expanded.

NOTES

1. Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in Japan*. 2 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1863).
2. Japan and the 1867 Paris Exposition symposium at Maison franco-japonaise, Tokyo, 19 November 2017; for more information, see Sano Kentaro, 'Japan and the 1867 Paris Exposition', *TJJ Online*, 9 March 2018, https://www.japanjournal.jp/society/pt20180309170702.html.
3. *Catalog der kaiserlich japanischen Ausstellung* (Vienna: Japanischen Ausstellungs-Commission, 1873), https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100329989 (exh. cat.); Herbert Fux, *Japan auf der Weltausstellung in Wien in 1873* (Vienna: Museum of Applied Arts, 1973) (exh. cat.); *Arts of East and West from World Expositions: 1855–1900. Paris, Vienna, Chicago* (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 2004) (exh. cat.).
4. *Internationale Ausstellung von Arbeiten aus edlen Metallen und Legirungen. Offizieller Katalog: Herausgegeben vom Bayrischen Gewerbemuseum in Nürnberg* (Nuremburg: Verlagsanstalt des Bayr. Gewerbemuseums, 1885) (exh. cat.), https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb00010446?page=,1; Sybille Girmond, 'Die Rezeption Japans. Die "Internationale Ausstellung von Arbeiten aus edlen Metallen und Legirungen" in Nuernberg 1885. Teil I Metallarbeiten', *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* 6 (2003): 32–48, 39.
5. Leopold Gmelin, 'Internationale Ausstellung von Arbeiten aus edlen Metallen und Legierungen' in Nuernberg 1885', *Zeitschrift des Kunst-Gewerbe-Vereins zu München* 11/12 (1885): 91.
6. On the three Siebolds, see Josef Kreiner (ed.), *200 years of Siebold: The Japanese Collections of Philipp Franz and Heinrich von Siebold* (Tokyo: Edo Tokyo Museum, 1996) (exh. cat.); Peter Noever, Johannes Wieninger, and Bettina Zorn (eds.), *Das alte Japan: Spuren und Objekte der Siebold-Reisen* (Munich: Prestel, 1997) (exh. cat.); Kaori Hidaka and Bettina Zorn, *Japan zur Meiji-Zeit: die Sammlung Heinrich von Siebold* (Vienna: KMH-Museumsverband, 2020) (exh. cat.); Kaori Hidaka and Bettina Zorn (eds.), *Transmitters of Another Culture II: The Collection of Heinrich von Siebold* (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 2021).
7. Doris Croissant, *Japanese Paintings in the Linden-Museum Stuttgart: A Selection from the Baelz Collection*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart and Tokyo: Linden-Museum Stuttgart and Kodansha, 1991).

8. Unfortunately, not much is known about R. Wagner. See Anja Walter-Ris, 'Der moderne Kunsthandel an Spree und Rhein von 1850–1918', in *Kunstleidenschaft im Dienst der Moderne. Die Geschichte der Galerie Nierendorf, Berlin/New York, 1920–1995*, ed. Anja Walter-Ris (Zurich: Interpublishers, 2003), n. 52: 'Hermann Pächter (1839–1902), originally a brewer, teamed up with the Berlin publishing house R. Wagner in the early eighties, which he slowly transformed into an art cabinet. East Asian, Japanese art, carpets, decorative arts of all kinds were traded'.
9. Wolfgang Scheppe, email message to author.
10. Johannes Wieninger: 'Er brachte viel Eigenartiges und Notwendiges mit: Arthur von Scala als Mittler zwischen Ost und West und die Grundlegung der Asiensammlung des heutigen Museums fuer angewandte Kunst 1868 – 1909', in *Kunst und Industrie: die Anfaenge des Museums fuer Angewandte Kunst in Wien*, ed. Peter Noever (Ostfildern: Oesterreichisches Museum fuer Angewandte Kunst, 2000) (exh. cat.), 170.
11. Marta Boscolo Marchi, 'The Wondrous Collection of Prince Henry of Bourbon. From His Journey to Japan to the Opening of the Museum of Oriental Art in Venice', in *The Tradition of Edo Creativity. The Skill and Soul of Craftsmen Give Birth to Japanese Beauty*, edited by Ochiai Noriko, Tanaka Yūji and Sugiyama Satoshi (Tokyo: Edo Tokyo Museum, 2020) (exh. cat.), 188–195.
12. Heinz Spielmann, *Justus Brinckmann* (Hamburg: Ellert & Richter, 2002).
13. Gabriel P. Weisberg, *L'Art Nouveau: la maison Bing* (Amsterdam: Belser, 2004) (exh. cat.); S. Bing, *Le japon artistique* (Paris: Japon Artistique and Marpon et Flammarion, 1888–1891), https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb344285339/date1888.liste; S. Bing, *Japanischer Formenschatz* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1888–1891).
14. Wibke Schrape, *Among Friends. Japanese Tea Ceramics* (Hamburg: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, 2020), https://zenodo.org/record/3991828#.YzF3_YTP2Ul.
15. Hayashi Tadamasa (ed.), *Histoire de l'art du Japon* (Paris: Maurice de Brunhoff, 1900), https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN780041135.
16. *Collection Hayashi: Objets d'art du Japon et de la Chine: peintures, livres réunis par T. Hayashi … dont la vente … du lundi 27 janvier au samedi 1er février 1902 inclus dans les Galeries de MM. Durand-Ruel … Paris* (Paris: S. Bing, 1902) (Auction cat.). *Collection Hayashi: Objets d'art et peintures de la Chine et du Japon réunis par T. Hayashi … deuxième partie dont la vente … du lundi 16 février au samedi 21 février 1903 inclus à l'Hôtel Drouot, Paris* (Paris: S. Bing, 1901-1903) (Auction cat.). *Collection Hayashi: Dessins, estampes, livres illustrés du Japon réunis par T. Hayashi … dont la vente … du lundi 2 juin au vendredi 6 juin 1902 inclus à l'Hôtel Drouot, Paris* (Paris: S. Bing, 1902) (Auction cat.); Committee of Hayashi Tadamasa Symposium (Ed.): *Hayashi Tadamasa – Japonisme and Cultural Exchanges* (Tokyo: Hatsubaimoto Seiunsha, 2007). Yasuko Kigi in *Correspondance addressée à Hayashi Tadamasa*, ed. Brigitte Koyama-Richard (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 2001).
17. *Catalog de la collection des gardes de sabres japonaises au Musée du Louvre. Don de Tadamasa Hayashi de Tokyo* (Paris: Hayashi, 1894) (exh. cat.).
18. Shinkichi Hara, *Die Meister der japanischen Schwertzierathen: Ueberblick ihrer Geschichte, Verzeichnis der Meister mit Daten ueber ihr Leben und mit ihren Namen in der Urschrift* (Hamburg: Gräfe & Sillem, 1902), https://www.zobodat.at/pdf/Jb-Hamburg-Wissenschaft-Anstalten_19_BH_I-XLIII.pdf.
19. Hara, *Die Meister der japanischen Schwertzierathen*. My translation.
20. Ruth Negendanck, *Die Galerie Ernst Arnold (1893–1951): Kunsthandel und Zeitgeschichte* (Weimar: VDG, 1998).
21. Ernst Arnold (ed.), *Ausstellung Japanischer Holzschnitte 17. – 19. Jahrhundert: Ausstellung im Kunstsalon von Ernst Arnold* (Dresden: n.p., 1895).
22. *Werke Hokusai's ausgestellt im K.K.Öst. Museum für Kunst u. Industrie Wien* (Vienna: Hirschler, 1901) (exh. cat.).
23. Hartmut Walravens, *Und der Sumeru meines Dankes wuerde wachsen. Beitraege zur ostasiatischen Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland (1896–1932): Briefe des Ethnologen und Kunstwissenschaftlers Ernst Große an seinen Freund und Kollegen Otto Kuemmel sowie Briefwechsel zwischen dem Kunsthistoriker Gustav Ecke und dem Architekten Ernst Boerschmann* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010).
24. Ernst Diez and Melanie Siassny, eds., *Katalog der Ausstellung ostasiatischer Kunst im Oesterreichischen Museum fuer Kunst und Industrie April-Juni 1922* (Vienna: Rikola, 1922) (exhib. cat.).
25. On this topic, see Masako Nohara Racel, 'Finding their Place in the World: Meiji Intellectuals and the Japanese Construction of an East-West Binary 1868–1912' (PhD diss., Georgia State University, 2011), https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=history_diss.

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SPOTLIGHT ON (COMMUNIST) ASIA

WHEN EAST AND WEST MET IN THE HEART OF EUROPE: VOJTĚCH CHYTIL AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO COLLECTING ASIAN ART IN CENTRAL EUROPE*

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INTRODUCTION

As part of the inquiry into the history of the Asian Art Collection at the National Gallery in Prague (NGP), which in 2021 celebrated seventy years since its founding, it is important to delve deeper into the processes that enabled some of the Asian artworks to reach Europe and become part of the public collections. The collection of these artworks was made possible by institutional conditions and contexts as well as exceptional individuals, who played important roles in getting hold of works of art from Asia. The purpose of this paper is to introduce one of these collectors, who is a towering figure in the collecting history of Chinese, Tibetan, and Japanese art in Central Europe in the 1920s and 1930s: Vojtěch Chytil (1896–1936). Chytil brought several hundred paintings by Qi Baishi (1864–1957), one of the most important modern Chinese painters, to former Czechoslovakia, together with dozens of paintings by other famous masters active in northern China, such as Chen Nian (1876–1970), Xiao Sun (1883–1944), and Jin Cheng (1878–1926), as well as works by some little-known painters, who are today pretty obscure both in China and Europe. Besides that, Chytil also collected Chinese Buddhist sculpture and decorative arts, as well as Tibetan art and Japanese woodblock prints.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Chytil organised around twenty selling exhibitions in the cultural centres of Central Europe, such as Prague, Brno, Bratislava, Vienna, Budapest, and Berlin – but even as far as London – and sold hundreds of the above-mentioned artworks to his contemporaries. In this way, the objects he amassed in the Far East became part of the Asian art collections in a number of places around Central Europe. After Chytil's sudden death in 1936, his collection

was inherited by his wife, Nina, and later the NGP was fortunate to receive a part of her estate when Nina died in 1981. In this way, many of the artworks that Chytil valued most and wasn't willing to sell during his lifetime entered the NGP's collection.

This article will elaborate on Chytil's career, his art collection, the exhibitions he held in Europe, and the lasting legacy of his activities for collecting Chinese art in the Central Europe. It will also highlight works of some lesser-known Beijing-based painters preserved in the NGP and other collections that are unique in the global context today and document modernist experiments and other painting styles of creators now forgotten even in China.

THE COLLECTOR

Vojtěch Chytil was born in 1896 into a poor family settled in the north-eastern part of today's Czech Republic.[1] He is said to have excelled in drawing and painting early in his youth, so upon the recommendation of a secondary school teacher, he enrolled at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts in 1912. There he studied what was called the General Course between 1912 and 1915. In the meantime, the First World War broke out in Europe, and most young men had to join the troops of the Austro-Hungarian army. Little information survives concerning Chytil's experiences during WWI. But different sources suggest that he deserted the army somewhere in today's Russia, travelled on his own through a large part of Siberia and subsequently on to Japan and Shanghai. Finally, sometime in spring 1918, he settled down in the town of Hankou (today's city of Wuhan) in central China. There he joined the large community of Westerners, which had established itself in the area more than half a century before, some of them dealing in raw materials or in tea. Chytil painted for wealthy Russian patrons; studied Chinese language, history, and culture; and travelled around central China.

He was also teaching painting: his class reportedly comprised eleven students, recruited mostly from the circles of his friends and acquaintances. Towards the end of 1918, he took part in a three-day exhibition in Shanghai, where he sold most of his paintings on display.[2] Having thus earned a substantial amount of money, he could afford to move to Beijing in spring 1919. In the same way as many other foreigners, he liked to paint in the Forbidden City and depict the sightseeing spots of Beijing. Chytil mentions that he completed more than fifty oil paintings, watercolours, and crayon drawings for an exhibition in 1919, after which he travelled back to Czechoslovakia.[3]

Chytil returned to Czechoslovakia in early 1920 and resumed his studies at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts, from which he graduated in mid-1921. Back home, he experienced what he liked to describe as 'the call of the East', so he applied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a position in the diplomatic service in the Far East. His request was granted, and in August 1921, he was sent as a

Figure 1. Vojtěch Chytil (second from the left) with students from the Beijing Academy of Arts in front of the Meridian Gate in Beijing. 1925–1927. Collection of the author.

legation clerk to Tokyo. In October he was relocated to the newly established Czechoslovak consulate in Beijing, and so began Chytil's second long period of stay in China, which lasted until summer 1927.[4]

Although busy with official responsibilities, Chytil soon resumed his diplomatic contacts in Beijing and reconnected with art circles; he was also able to find time to paint and sell more of his paintings. At the same time, he was hired by the Beijing Academy of Arts, where he taught between 1922 and 1927 (fig. 1). Chytil's abilities as a teacher and his personal charisma supposedly won him fame and popularity among students and other teachers. His pupil Li Jianchen (1900–2002), who later became a well-known watercolour painter, recalls in his memoirs that Chytil's paintings were mainly admired for his subtle use of colours, with which he was able to create a remarkable atmosphere close to that in original Chinese paintings. Only a handful of Chytil's own works, which could document his painting style and favourite subjects, survive to this day.

Chytil took part in a number of artistic activities in China, displaying his oil paintings and watercolours, for example, in the spring venue of the 1924 *Inter-*

national Exhibition of Fine Arts (*Wanguo meishu zhanlanhui chunji dahui*) in Shanghai, where paintings, sculptures, and other objects by leading foreign and Chinese artists were shown. In spring 1925 Chytil left the services of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs to live in Beijing as a private person. This allowed him to devote his energies entirely to teaching, painting, and collecting. In March of that year, he married a woman of Russian origin settled in Beijing, Nina Mihailovna Kokorin (1899–1981). It was Nina, in the end, who became instrumental in preserving his collection intact after Chytil's premature death, and she eventually bequeathed it to the NGP in the early 1980s.

Besides teaching and exhibiting his own paintings, Chytil initiated the founding of the Art Splendour Society (*Yiguang she*) in Beijing in 1926 and recruited members from the student body. The proclaimed aim of the association was the study of Western art techniques, particularly the research of watercolour techniques. Its activities also included sketching nude models, which caused such a stir in conservative Beijing that purportedly even the police had to be called to calm down the situation. Chytil was summoned for an explanation and, to help the public understand the activities of the young painters better, allegedly decided to organise a large exhibition that would introduce the works of the Art Splendour Society to contemporaries. The exhibition, held under the auspices of the premier's wife, Huang Huilan, and the Deputy Minister of Education, Chen Renzhong, opened on 23 June 1926 in the Sun Yat-sen Pavilion in Central Park in Beijing. It was very successful, and most of the works sold in a few days.[5] In December 1926 Chytil also took part in the *Exhibition of Peking Artists* in the Beijing Hotel and displayed thirteen paintings, some of which depicted architectural subjects, portraits, and flowers. Afterwards, he continued to teach Western painting at the Beijing Academy of Arts, from which he retired in summer 1927 to pursue his plans to collect and exhibit Asian art in Europe.

By establishing himself in the art circles in northern China in the 1920s, Chytil had the opportunity not only to sell his own paintings but also to see and acquire paintings by Chinese painters active there at the time. During his sojourns in Beijing, Chytil made numerous profitable contacts and acquaintances, which enabled him to acquire works for his European shows, organised between 1927 and 1936.

CHYTIL'S CHINESE ACQUAINTANCES

The Beijing Academy of Arts, where Vojtěch Chytil taught Western painting, was one of the main art training institutions in China at that time, and many prominent painters were thus connected with it.[6] Among them was Qi Baishi, who lectured on the techniques of traditional Chinese ink painting and had just started to become famous in China, as well as in Japan. Chytil became one of his early clients and supporters, and gradually, he became completely enamoured with Qi Baishi's art. Two other Beijing-based painters who were close to Chytil at this

Figure 2. *Guanyin* by Xiao Songren. 1925. Ink and colours on paper, 280 × 100 cm. Originally in Vojtěch Chytil's collection, now National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 5708. (See plate 15, p. 252)

time were Chen Banding and Xiao Sun. Another noteworthy painter was Jin Cheng, who was, among other activities, responsible for negotiating and organising the joint Sino-Japanese exhibitions, which helped Qi Baishi and other artists gain popularity in Japan in the early 1920s.[7]

Besides these artists, who are today recognised as the movers and shakers of the Beijing art scene in the 1920s and 1930s, there was a number of painters who are all but forgotten today. Thanks to the collecting interests of Vojtěch Chytil, however, their artworks are preserved to this day in European collections. One of these emerging artists was Xiao Songren (1907?–?), whose ten paintings are today preserved in the collection of the NGP. Chytil praised him as the leader of a large group of young painters from the Beijing Academy of Arts and as a brave personality of good standing in his time, but curiously enough, hardly any trace of his life and work can be found today. Not even his dates of birth and death are certain. All we know is that he styled himself as S. J. Hsiao in the texts published about him in English and that he also used the pseudonym One-Eyed Pilgrim (*Yi yan xing zhe*) as part of his signatures on preserved paintings. He seems to have been born in humble conditions in Tianjin, but he left for Beijing during his teenage years and started to study at the Beijing Academy of Arts, where he met Qi Baishi, Vojtěch Chytil, and other teachers who helped him cultivate his indisputable painting talent. Besides the guidance of his teachers, Xiao Songren was obviously inspired by Western modernist styles, and there are some indications that he also pursued his interest in Buddhism and other systems of thought, which influenced his own artistic creations (fig. 2).[8]

Another interesting aspect of the Beijing art scene in the interwar period is that a considerable number of women artists were involved; according to the preserved testimonies, they started to enjoy a status similar to the one of their male counterparts, which in itself was huge progress from the traditional order.[9] One of these young women artists was the painter Luo Baoshen (dates unknown), who specialised in the genre of flowers and birds. Few details of her life and career survive, and only a handful of her paintings are documented in the period press and catalogues. According to the preserved sources, her father, Luo Shouping

Figure 3. *Hortensia* by Luo Baoshen. 1931. Ink and colours on silk, 33.5 × 44.5 cm. Originally in Vojtěch Chytil's collection, later in Vladimír Richter's collection, now National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 6710. (See plate 16, p. 253)

Figure 4. *Landscape* by Shao Xilian. 1928. Ink and colours on paper, 89 × 39.2 cm. Originally in Vojtěch Chytil's collection, now National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 5723. (See plate 17, p. 254)

(dates unknown), was a physician, and Baoshen was among the first graduates of the Beijing Academy of Arts. She painted using Chinese as well as Western techniques, and she focused chiefly on painting flowers using the meticulous 'laborious brush' technique, in which the contours of objects are delineated in ink outlines, which are afterwards filled in with colours. It is said she collected over two hundred types of flowers growing in Beijing and the surrounding area, and she created a painting manual using them. She was involved in several artistic societies, such as the Beiping Art Society (*Beiping yishe*), and some sources point to her activities in the Southern Field Painting Society (*Nantian huashe*). This group of painters studied the style of famous Qing dynasty painter Yun Shouping (1633–1690) and copied some of his brightly coloured flower compositions, which had been a style preferred by female painters in traditional China. A painting of goldfish under a magnolia twig by Luo Baoshen is reproduced in the period press,[10] which is very similar to another picture by female painter Sun Kewu. Both were obviously modelled after a now lost painting by Yun Shouping, which the women copied as part of their practice. Another painting by Luo Baoshen, rarely preserved in a European collection, is *Hortensia*, painted in 1931 and exhibited as part of Chytil's European presentations of modern Chinese painting (fig. 3).

Vojtěch Chytil taught at the Beijing Academy of Arts until 1927 and reputedly devoted enormous energy to promoting the works of his young students. Besides,

he was also captivated by painting styles of some of his fellow teachers at the Beijing Academy. Among them was Shao Xilian (1888–1954), a master almost forgotten today, whom Chytil met as a teacher of Chinese ink painting at this institution. Reportedly a leader of a huge group of painters who strove to revive Chinese ink painting from indigenous sources, without resorting to borrowing elements from Western art, Shao created dozens of landscapes that were part of Chytil's exhibitions in Europe. Four landscapes, mostly in the archaic blue-and-green style, where mountain slopes are coloured with azurite and malachite (fig. 4), and one painting of shrimps by Shao are today preserved in the NGP's collection. Another of his landscapes is part of the collection of the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asian Art in Budapest, which received it as a gift from Chytil after his exhibition there in 1930.

EXHIBITIONS OF CHYTIL'S COLLECTION OF ASIAN ART ORGANISED IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Between 1927 and 1936, Chytil organised around twenty exhibitions of modern Chinese painting and other Asian artworks in European cultural centres, and a few more were put together by his wife and friends after his death in 1936.[11] Most of these exhibitions offered artworks for sale and a massive interest in them throughout the decade of Chytil's activity resulted in the fact that dozens or even hundreds of Asian artworks got into private and public collections around Central Europe. The most remarkable part of these were modern Chinese paintings, which had not been sought after as a collecting article in Europe before, but Vojtěch Chytil did his best to promote them among his contemporaries.

The first show, entitled simply *Chinese Art*, took place in Prague in January and February 1928. Two of Chytil's Chinese students, Wang Meng (1901–1987) and Sun Kewu (1904–1931), were the two most extensively represented Chinese painters here. They had originally arrived in Prague in 1926 and enrolled at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts to study in the studio of Czech painter Max Švabinský (1873–1962). During their three years in Prague, however, they also created a number of Chinese ink paintings, which they sold at exhibitions to earn a living. It appears that when Vojtěch Chytil decided to start exhibiting his collection in Prague, he wanted to test the possibilities of showing modern Chinese painting in Europe first and decided to build his first exhibition around the works of Wang and Sun. According to the preserved reports and reviews in contemporary press, this strategy worked very well, and Chinese painting was met with a warm welcome from both visitors and critics. Chytil, thus encouraged and convinced about the plausibility of his undertakings, moved on with the preparations of larger exhibitions.

A more comprehensive selection of works by Beijing masters was displayed at the second Prague exhibition organised in spring 1929. The catalogue published for this show contains a preface where Chytil describes the latest development in

Figure 5. *Fisherman* by Qi Baishi. Ink and colours on paper, 141.5 × 49 cm. Originally in Vojtěch Chytil's collection, now National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 1446. (See plate 18, p. 255)

the field of Chinese painting and expounds on the qualities of painters who have brought about revolutionary changes in this discipline.[12] An archival document records Chytil's statement that he had planned to present works by Qi Baishi at this exhibition, but due to a delay caused by the shipping company, the paintings arrived in Europe too late and were shown only at the next venue, in Vienna in spring 1930.[13] Thus, it is here that the paintings by Qi Baishi, Chen Banding, Xiao Sun, and other major modern ink painters from northern China were presented in Europe for the first time. The exhibition took place in the building of the Wiener Secession in Vienna and was inaugurated under the auspices of the Chinese ambassador in Austria, Dekien Toung (Chin. Tong Deqian 1887–1944?). It was reported as a sensation and received the attention of not only art circles but also the Austrian nobility and political representatives of the day.

Chytil was greatly encouraged by this success and returned repeatedly to China to acquire new paintings for his upcoming shows. In 1930 three more exhibitions were staged in Brno, Berlin, and Budapest. They all had a fairly similar structure, typically composed of three major parts. One part was usually devoted to modern Chinese painting, represented mostly by the above-mentioned masters and their pupils. These were complemented with a few paintings by painters from other areas or schools, such as Wu Changshi (1844–1927), whom Chytil admired and whom he regarded as a predecessor of Qi Baishi. The second part presented Tibetan painting and sculpture, which Chytil collected passionately as a private delight. The last part focused on Japanese woodblock prints, together with a few paintings by Japanese masters of the day.

In late 1930 and early 1931, Chytil was planning another extensive show in Prague and was determined to secure the best paintings by Qi Baishi and other Beijing artists available at the time. In the end, a number of Qi's masterpieces were shown: a rare album of plants and insects painted on silk, the famous *Fisherman* (fig. 5), and the *Lake in the Wind*, which Chytil allegedly bought from a private collection. In 1932 and 1933 Chytil's collection was repeatedly exhibited in Czechoslovakia. At least four shows are documented to have been organized in

different local cultural centres, such as Pilsen, Olomouc, Pardubice, and Ostrava. In summer 1933 and 1934, Chytil held two shows in London, which were unique in that they did not offer the exhibited works for sale.[14] These shows were the first to present modern Chinese painting to the British public and were widely covered by the press. Art critics of renown, such as the British Museum Keeper of the Chinese collection Laurence Binyon (1869–1943), praised the qualities of the Chinese paintings in Chytil's collection.[15]

After the artworks returned from London in 1934, Chytil decided to expand his commercial activities towards a broader spectrum of objects, and he also wanted to engage in politics, which met with little success. Nevertheless, he was still investing lots of energy into popularising Chinese art in Europe and staged another large-scale exhibition in the Slovak capital of Bratislava in summer 1935. The following year, in spring 1936, Chytil was again preparing a grandiose show in Vienna. As usual, several dozen paintings by Qi Baishi, Chen Nian, Xiao Sun, and Jin Cheng were shown, side by side with works by lesser-known artists, such as Hu Peiheng (1892–1965), Luo Baoshen, Shao Xilian, Xiao Songren, and others. This time, the exhibition also featured an array of Chinese applied arts, such as fragments of old wall paintings, earthenware and porcelain figures, wooden statues, and lacquer objects.[16] Tibetan art was again displayed side by side with Chinese works. This show, the last exhibition Chytil managed to put together himself, thus represented the scope of his collection attained by the mid-1930s, after some fifteen years of fervent activity.

During the preparations for the Vienna exhibition, however, Chytil suffered a recurrence of typhus, which he had contracted during his days of wartime captivity in Ukraine, and which resulted in incapacitation. He collapsed and died a few days afterwards, at the age of forty. After his death, three more exhibitions of his collection were organised in Czechoslovakia and Hungary by his wife Nina and close friends. Thereafter, unfortunately, the Second World War began to threaten Europe, which severely affected activities related to the collecting and exchange of artworks for more than five years. After the end of the WWII, Nina kept the family collection for more than thirty years and occasionally lent a few works to an exhibition; she also sold some of them to the NGP. Upon her death in 1981, she bequeathed the artworks from Chytil's collection to this institution, and they became an important part of the holdings of the Collection of Asian Art. In addition, a large number of the objects displayed at Chytil's exhibitions had been sold in the 1920s and 1930s and had ended up in the collections of European businesspeople, politicians, and lovers of art. Many of these private collections were unfortunately dispersed during the war and again during the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia and other countries of the socialist bloc after 1948. In spite of this, numerous works can still be found among the family holdings of the heirs of the collectors who had originally bought them from Chytil's exhibitions, surfacing now and then in auctions or offers to the National Gallery in Prague.

CONCLUSION

Chytil's activities established a basis for the subsequent collection and exhibition of Chinese art, most notably modern Chinese painting, around Central Europe. An analysis of the contents of these exhibitions shows that during his exhibiting and commercial career, Vojtěch Chytil mainly concentrated on promoting the work of modern Chinese painters active at the Beijing Academy of Arts. In his texts, nonetheless, although he tried to position these painters in a pseudo art historical context, Chytil never ventured beyond this group of painters from northern China to learn what was happening in the art scene elsewhere in China. He never mentioned, for example, Lin Fengmian (1900–1991), who was Chytil's superior at the Beijing Academy of Arts before moving on to Hangzhou to start his own art academy there; he even opened one of the most important exhibitions of works by Chytil's pupils in 1926. In his own painting, however, Lin Fengmian was inspired by European modernist masters and broke away from the conventions of traditional Chinese ink painting, which might have been the cause of Chytil's refusal to collect his artworks.

Chytil also never explored the role of Liu Haisu (1896–1994) or Xu Beihong (1895–1953), who both organised other shows of modern Chinese painting that toured around Europe side by side with those put together by Chytil. Curiously, for example, Chytil mounted a huge and successful show in Berlin in 1930, but never realised that Liu Haisu was present there at roughly the same time, preparing for his 1931 exhibition *Ausstellung Chinesischer Maler der Jetztzeit*.[17] Most interestingly, Chytil never mentioned some other important Beijing masters active outside the Beijing Academy of Arts, even though he must have come across their paintings. For instance, he bought the painting *Tao Yuanming and His Poem Return to the Fields* by Pu Ru (1896–1963), which is now regarded as one of Pu's most precious works in European collections, but Chytil explained neither his background nor his importance in the catalogue of the 1931 show in Vienna where the work was first displayed. He merely included a detail of Pu Ru's beautifully painted figure of the poet Tao Yuanming on the cover of the volume, keeping silent about its author in his essay on the development of modern Chinese painting, which served as the catalogue's introduction.

It therefore seems that Chytil was basically exhibiting works of his colleagues and students from the Beijing Academy of Arts, together with a few of his other favourite painters, and promoting them vigorously as masters responsible for the revival of Chinese ink painting. Even though Chytil was an active and enthusiastic collector and teacher of painting, he did not have any true strategy or concept, nor a specialised training that would give him a more profound insight into the workings of the larger art scene in China. His shows received positive responses in Europe and stirred a huge wave of interest in modern Chinese painting, but the artworks were admired mostly for their aesthetic qualities and partly as examples of a certain exoticism.

At the time, media hardly published any critical responses to Chytil's presentations, which is in striking contrast to his experience in the United States. In the early 1930s, drunk on his success with the European public, Chytil was looking for possibilities to show his collection in the United States, which he crossed several times during his trips from Asia to Europe. He sent letters of introduction to Alex Hrdlička (1869-1943), a countryman active in the Smithsonian Institution, who promised to help him pass his proposals to the curators of the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Chytil boasted the financial success of his exhibitions in Europe and exaggerated his influence on some of the Chinese government members, who had reputedly promised him support with bringing to the USA the collections of ancient Chinese art from the Palace Museum in Beijing:

> The sensational success of those exhibitions in Europe inspired me to organize a large Chinese National Art-exhibition in America, than [those presented in] London and Paris. Old and new art showing the development from the earliest to the latest days. With the help of Chinese Government, as we need to obtain some of those scrolls from the National Museum of Peking /Peipin/. And through the Chinese Legation we reported it already to the Nanking Government. […] And indeed, I wish to bring it to United States first, to the great nation which takes more interest in Young China than any other country in the world. Up to that time my book about modern China Art will be completed and I expect to read lectures on Chinese and Japanese Arts in United States. […] I have introduced the Idea of the exhibition already in 1927 to the Chinese Government in Peking and as owing to the troubles at that time it was hard to push it through, so I undertook the task by myself. I paid all the transport-expenses, I have done all the necessary propaganda. I received 30% from the entrance-tickets to cover my expenses. And to add that the exhibition is enchanting the visitors that much, that more than 600 pictures have been sold in that old poor Europe of today at 3 cities – Vienna-Berlin-Budapest – it says something! Of course, only part of the exhibition is for sale! Of course, I do not know how you are arranging such things in United States, and I leave it gladly to the Institution which will house the show, or which might like to bring it over.[18]

Obviously, after the huge success of Chytil's European exhibitions, his hopes were high, but he was put off decisively by the response of the curators of the American museums:

> the Museum is not interested in modern art primarily because it is modern, nor in ancient art primarily because it is ancient; what really interests us, is art which is the best in quality of its kind […] [and] all exhibitions given in this Museum, are open to the public free of charge.[19]

The curators in the USA were unimpressed by the emphasis on the financial success of Chytil's exhibitions, as well as his proclaimed connections in China. The American museums were more concerned with objective qualities and the comprehensiveness of a presented collection and didn't dwell on any commercial concerns. From the letter exchange, it is obvious that the exhibiting conventions in the USA differed considerably from those in Europe, where the private and public sphere still overlapped significantly. Chytil was thus left to pursue his interests in the 'old poor Europe' alone. Even there, however, contrary to what he himself declared in many of his texts and talks, none of Chytil's exhibitions of modern Chinese painting represented the whole range of achievements of contemporary Chinese painters. His collection as well as his shows were closely linked to Beijing art circles and thus document the reception of one part of Chinese modern ink painting in Europe throughout the 1920s and 1930s. It remains a task for future research to contextualize these activities within the larger picture of the introduction of modern Chinese art in other parts of the Western world, where modern paintings from other parts of China were in the spotlight.

NOTES

* This article was supported by a NGP's Grant for the Long-Term Conceptual Development of a Research Organisation of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

1. For details of Chytil's biography, see Michaela Pejčochová, *Emissary from the Far East. Vojtěch Chytil and the Collecting of Modern Chinese Painting in Interwar Czechoslovakia* (Prague: National Gallery in Prague, 2019).
2. For a detailed report from this exhibition, see Liu Haisu, 'Canguan Fazonghui meishu bolanhui jilüe' [Brief Report on My Visit to the Art Exhibition at the French Club], *Shibao* (19 and 20 January 1919).
3. Oldřich Král, 'Vojtech Chytil – A Czech Painter in Beijing', *Orientations* XX, no. 8 (1991): 26–32.
4. For Chytil's term of service with the Foreign Ministry, see Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, Personal Documents, Vojtěch Chytil.
5. Myriophylle [Li Zhaoshi], 'Yiguangshe huazhan canguan ji' [Report on My Visit to the Exhibition of the Art Splendour Society], *Shibao* (2 July 1926).
6. For a concise history of this institution and information about its courses and teachers, see Li Zhonghua, *Bilu lanlü xing guomei – 1917–1937 nian Beijing guoli zhuanmen meishu jiaoyu yanjiu* [Pioneers Opening Virgin Lands to Uplift National Art – Research on Specialised Art Education on the National Level in Beijing in 1917–1937] (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 2008).
7. For more on these exhibitions, see Aida Yuen Wong, *Parting the Mists: Discovering Japan and the Rise of National-Style Painting in Modern China* (Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).
8. Besides the paintings preserved in the collection of the NGP, see reproductions of Xiao Songren's works in the Tianjin journal *Beiyang huabao* throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s.
9. Details about student life in Beijing and the fact that Chytil's male and female students lived and worked together in a common house, pretty much breaking away from traditional restrictions, are mentioned in his pupil Li Jianchen's memoirs: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_50d6b97e010093me.html (accessed 8 February 2022).
10. *Salon* XI, 1932, no. 12, 15 December, 14.
11. For a detailed study of Chytil's European exhibitions, see Michaela Pejčochová, 'Vojtěch Chytil and His European Exhibitions of Chinese art. 20th-century Chinese Painting First Introduced in Europe', in *Qi Baishi yanjiu di san ji* [Research on Qi Baishi. Vol. 3] (Nanning: Guangxi meishu chubanshe, 2015), 1–21.

12. See the catalogue of the exhibition: *51. výstava Jednoty umělců vytvarných v Praze. Japonské a čínské umění současné* [The 51st Exhibition of the Union of Creative Artists in Prague: Japanese and Chinese Contemporary Art] (Prague: Union of Creative Artists, 1929) (exh. cat.).
13. Prague City Archives, Papers of the Mánes Fine Arts Union, item no. 4.1., letter from Vojtěch Chytil to the Mánes Fine Arts Union dated 15 January 1931.
14. See the catalogues *Contemporary Chinese Art* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 23 May–22 July 1933) and *Professor Chytil's Collection of Modern Chinese Art* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 14 June–28 July 1934).
15. Chinese Art in Whitechapel. A Unique Exhibition. Mr. Laurence Binyon on Art Lessons from the Far East, *East London Observer*, 22 May 1933.
16. For the complete contents of this exhibition, see the catalogue *Ausstellung alter und neuer Chinesischer Kunst*, Vienna, 16 April–May 1936.
17. For more on the coincidence that Chytil's and Liu Haisu's exhibitions of modern Chinese painting were held in Europe at the same time, see Michaela Pejčochová, 'Exhibitions of Chinese Painting in Europe in the Interwar Period: The Role of Liu Haisu as Artistic Ambassador', in *The Reception of Chinese Art Across Cultures*, ed. Michelle Ying-Ling Huang (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 179–199.
18. Archive of the Smithsonian Institution, letter from Vojtěch Chytil to Alex Hrdlička from 6 December 1930. The author's original wording is reproduced here without corrections.
19. Archive of the Smithsonian Institution, letter from John Ellerton Lodge to Vojtěch Chytil from 31 December 1930.

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BIG PRESENTS MAINTAIN THE FRIENDSHIP: THE GIFT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA TO THE STAATLICHE MUSEEN ZU BERLIN (NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN BERLIN), GDR, IN 1959

Uta Rahman-Steinert

There is a proverb in German that reads 'Small presents maintain the friendship.' In the following, an event will be described that proves that big presents are also essential contributions to friendship – in this case, the friendship of two states.

It should be mentioned in advance that the article reflects an interim stage of research. Due to a number of circumstances, I have not yet accessed all the archives I plan to consult, in particular the Bundesarchiv (Federal Archive) of the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Federal Republic of Germany). This paper is mainly based on the material I found in the Zentralarchiv (Central Archive) of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin).

The emphasis of this research is therefore on the connection of the objects donated by the People's Republic of China to the history of the Ostasiatische Sammlung (East Asian Collection), the museum that was the ultimate addressee of the gift. The following story is further evidence that national politics and museum histories are closely intertwined and that the interests and the policies of a nation state may determine the fate of museums, at least in the case of state museums. Such dependencies continue in current museum practices as well. The decision to move the exhibitions of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Asian Art Museum) and the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin from the periphery of Berlin to the Humboldt Forum in the centre of the city was not least driven by the intention to demonstrate cosmopolitism. The collections on the Museum Island, which focus primarily on European art and culture, are intended to be enhanced by the non-European collections to form an overall museum of humankind.

In 1945 Berlin was in ruins, as were most of its museums, among them the Museum Island and the former building of the Kunstgewerbemuseum (Museum

of Decorative Arts, today, Gropius Bau). The Ostasiatische Kunstsammlung (East Asian Art Collection), founded in 1906, has had its exhibition rooms in the former building of the Kunstgewerbemuseum since 1924. The historical museum buildings were considerably affected by the bombing raids on Berlin in 1943 and 1945, causing the Ostasiatische Kunstsammlung to lose five per cent of its holdings. Ninety per cent of its collection had been moved to storage in an anti-aircraft bunker at the zoo before 1943 and was removed after the war by the Soviet Army's Trophy Commission to the Soviet Union.[1] The rest was kept in secure sites outside Berlin. This portion of the collection was evacuated to areas later occupied by the Western Allies and was returned to West Berlin. As a result of the Second World War, not only Berlin but also most of the museum collections were divided. Due to the removal and division, there were hardly any museum holdings of East Asian art in the whole of Berlin, and virtually none in East Berlin.[2]

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) were both founded in October 1949 – only six days apart. Both countries immediately established diplomatic relations and became close allies. Founding a museum in which the cultural achievements of the Chinese people could be presented, became an important cultural and political task on the agenda of the government of the GDR. This was certainly no easy task, with no notable museum collections at hand.

Despite this, on 18 August 1951, the Staatliche Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten (State Commission on Art Affairs) of the Ministry of Culture issued a letter to the general director of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin proposing to establish a new East Asian department.[3] The National Museum's director of administration stated in his reply on 23 August 1951: 'There are certainly opportunities to rebuild such a department if we are provided with the appropriate means to purchase works of art from the East Asian cultural area.' Rooms are not a problem, he continued, and he made up a tentative staff list.[4]

Without delay, the mandate was implemented. It became the first topic on the agenda of the Directors' Conference[5] on 24 April 1952.[6] To deal with the deficiencies, the director of the Kunstgewerbemuseum agreed to contribute objects of East Asian provenance. The list he delivered a few days later specified several hundred objects, mainly porcelains and other ceramics, but also objects of glass, enamel, and bronze. He remarked that most of the items were from the nineteenth century and of rather limited quality; he did not think the number of items worth being put on display was large.[7] The director of the Ägyptisches Museum (Egyptian Museum) of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin was commissioned to contact a possible research assistant for the department, Käte Finsterbusch (1924–2018),[8] who had been located at Leipzig University. Preparations proceeded quickly, and a circular from 2 September 1952 already listed the next steps: newly restored and renovated rooms became available, three of which, in the south wing of the Pergamonmuseum, were designated to the new department. Further measures were taken to acquire additional works of East Asian art.

One of these measures was to hire a specialist to set up the first three rooms. Bruno Voigt (1912–1988)[9] was engaged, initially on the basis of a short-term contract, starting from 1 July 1952. At that time still the director of the museum in Gotha, Voigt subsequently became the director of the Ostasiatische Sammlung in 1954. He was described as a qualified expert on the subject, 'who has an almost complete collection of East Asian antiquities in his house [i.e. the museum in Gotha].'[10] Voigt also brought with him the prospect of additional long-term loans from the holdings of the museum in Gotha.

Voigt designed a preliminary exhibition concept that, despite its limited scope, formulated the claim to present representative objects from all historical eras and dynasties. This overview was planned to be housed in the first two rooms, followed by one gallery for the interaction between China and Europe and another gallery for contemporary woodcuts and objects of arts and crafts from the PRC. The educational purpose was prioritised in the concept and remained a focus later on. Voigt also recommended that contemporary but also older art should be acquired in the PRC 'to ensure a high standard for this department.'[11]

The next step was to invite museum experts from China. Close cooperation and intensive exchange with colleagues from China were characteristic and an expression of the trusting relation between the countries. Based on a cultural agreement between the GDR and the P. R. of China in 1954, two persons whose positions have not yet been identified, Wang Yi and Wang Zhenduo,[12] visited the GDR between January and April 1955. According to the itineraries, they completed an enormous programme during their visit. Their travel itinerary comprised twelve densely written pages. In less than three months, they visited about twenty towns. In ten of them they examined museum collections to assess dates and the authenticity of Chinese objects.[13] They were accompanied by the aforementioned Finsterbusch, then research assistant at Leipzig University and in charge of the Ostasiatische Sammlung in Berlin on a part-time basis. Presumably, the trip had been intended to investigate the collections of the museums (and even one art dealer) all over the GDR in order to identify potential loans for Berlin. However, no loans were realised. Although no record can be traced so far, it is conceivable that the quality of the objects did not meet the requirements. There are also indications that the provincial museums were not enthusiastic about giving away what they considered to be their highlights, a fact that can be gleaned from some of the accompanying documents.

The year 1955 was important for the relationship between the PRC and the GDR. Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl travelled to China and brought with him a number of objects: ten banners of the Yihetuan who led the uprising against the Eight Nations Alliance (Boxer War) and three volumes of the *Yongle Dadian*, a Chinese encyclopaedia compiled between 1403 and 1408 that is largely lost today. The objects had been looted by German troops during the Boxer War between 1899 and 1901 in north China. Their return, in a highly symbolic ceremony, confirmed the close relations between the two countries and the Treaty of Friendship

and Cooperation, which was signed during the visit. With this gesture, the GDR government distanced itself from the colonial heritage of imperial Germany and positioned itself as a close ally of the PRC. I am including this digression because I believe this gesture may have contributed to the positive attitude from the Chinese side, which later led to the decision about the donation.

The development of the Ostasiatische Sammlung was not only driven by friendly relations with the PRC but also shaped by the competition of the economic and social systems of the time. In West Berlin, as early as 20 December 1952, the East Asian department of the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum, until 2000: Museum für Völkerkunde) had opened new galleries in Dahlem that even included a stage for shadow plays. This, however, did not seem to have been the benchmark for the museum in East Berlin which claimed to be an art museum, not an anthropological or cultural history museum. It had moved to newly renovated permanent exhibition spaces in the north wing of the Pergamonmuseum which were inaugurated alongside the opening of the show *Contemporary Painting of China – Guohua*, on 16 September 1957[14].

In June of the same year, museum director Voigt underlined in a letter directed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

> When it was considered to open the Chinese department here, with the holdings available from the museums of the GDR and from private ownership, the opening of the extraordinarily interesting and valuable East Asian collection in West Berlin – Museums Dahlem – had not yet taken place […] In the current situation, neither the quantity nor the quality of our objects are sufficient to come anywhere close to the level in Dahlem.[15]

According to the archival sources, this statement was obviously based on the prospect of setting up an exhibition of artefacts from the Turfan Collection[16] in Dahlem. Voigt further argued that he, together with Finsterbusch, had researched the holdings of all relevant museums in the GDR. Taking into account the fact that the most valuable objects were already part of their respective exhibitions, only porcelains from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries were available for loan to Berlin. Voigt concluded that loans from the PRC were therefore highly desirable:

> For if we really were to receive loans from all epochs, even if only on a modest scale, this material, which is still unknown in Europe, would put us in a position not only to catch up with the Museum Dahlem as well as other West German museums but also to surpass them.[17]

He proposed negotiating with the PRC government for permanent loans and attached a list of desirable objects that he had already compiled earlier in January. The list comprised seven categories: ceramics, bronzes, jades and other stones, wooden works, lacquerware, stone rubbings, paintings, and objects from contem-

porary art production. The list had a comprehensive character; Voigt had clearly tried to take into account all significant eras and styles of Chinese art history. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of Shang and Zhou bronzes as well as on ceramics from Neolithic periods and burial objects from the Han, Wei, and Tang dynasties. The proposals for bronzes, for instance, listed one to seven pieces for each of the eight historical periods Voigt quoted, among them bronzes of the *ding*, *gu*, *hu*, *you*, and *jue* type from the Shang period (1550–1050 BCE, dating in the source) or bronzes with figurative motifs as well as mirrors from the Tang dynasty (618–907). The most extensive list concerned ceramics, which proposed a maximum of eighty-seven pieces from all periods. The entry on the topic 'Painting' reveals an interesting detail. Voigt was aware that delicate Chinese paintings on paper or silk were not suitable for permanent loans and therefore requested copies. He obviously understood this to mean painted copies made by artists, because he at the same time emphasised: 'We cannot exhibit reproductions.' In the concluding sentence of the list, Voigt emphasised that the final choice should be left entirely to the Chinese experts and state officials.[18]

The designed loans were apparently incorporated into a plan for an exhibition to mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of the PRC. In some of his letters in 1958 and 1959, Voigt refers to an exhibition entitled *4000 Years of Chinese Art*. Besides the aforementioned loans, the concept was expanded and also included stone rubbings as well as costumes, requisites, instruments, paintings, and printed objects documenting the Chinese opera. Contemporary art, paintings, drawings, and woodcuts 'depicting the liberation struggle and the construction of the People's Republic of China' were supposed to form a separate section.[19]

The fact that, in the end, the exhibits were given not as loans but as donations came as a surprise. The GDR government received official notification about the donation by letter, dated 28 July 1959 from the PRC's Ministry of Culture.[20] The collection that was intended for gift by the Chinese side had been exhibited in the Palace Museum in Beijing before being sent to the GDR. When Voigt visited China in June 1959, he had already been informed about the donation and visited the exhibition. It has not yet been possible to retrace whether all the objects that were ultimately part of the gift were shown in the Palace Museum's presentation. On the invitation card for the opening of the exhibition in Berlin, the exhibition title reads *Four Thousand Years of Chinese Ceramics and Porcelain*, suggesting that the final selection of objects for the gift was not known on the German side until it arrived. Moreover, the exhibition that had been planned on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the PRC did not open as scheduled on 1 October, the PRC's national day, but a couple weeks later, on 28 November 1959. This was due to a delay in the shipment from China. The fourteen crates containing the objects were shipped on the motor vessel 'Dresden' and did not reach the port in Wismar on time, arriving belatedly on 10 October.

The government donation comprised 251 exquisite arts and crafts objects, including ceramics; objects made of lacquer, jade, and enamel; woven silk fabrics

Figure 1. Selection of Qing dynasty imperial porcelains, donation of the PRC, 1959 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, photo: Jörg von Bruchhausen. (See plate 19, p. 256)

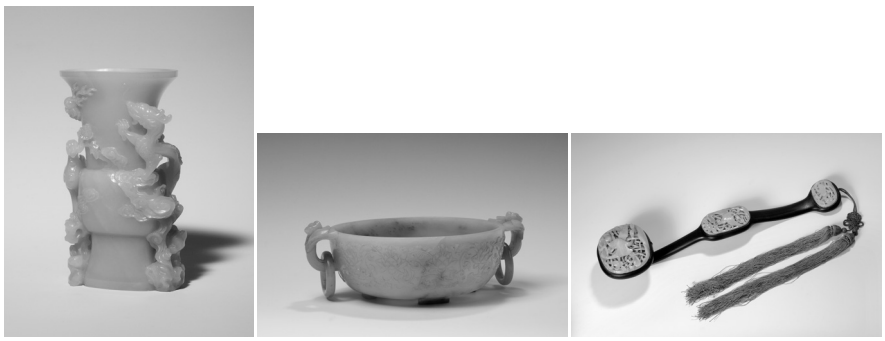

Figure 2. Selection of Qing dynasty jade carvings, donation of the PRC, 1959 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, photo: Jörg von Bruchhausen. (See plate 20, p. 257)

and embroideries from the Neolithic period, the third millennium BCE, to the end of the imperial period in 1911. The 175 ceramic works made up the majority of the donation. This selection does indeed, with reservations, provide a kind of an overview of the history of Chinese ceramics. The Neolithic period and the Shang (17th? c.–11th c. BCE) and Zhou (11th c.–256 BCE) periods are covered by eighteen pieces, followed by thirty-four mainly burial objects from the Han (202 BCE–220 CE) to the Tang (618–907) dynasties. In the general context, two hollow bricks, probably architectural elements from burial sites, each more than a metre long, appear unusual. The Han and Tang burial objects do not only comprise vessels but also a considerable number of figurative sculptures, among them female and male servants, warriors, and animals. Models of household objects such as wells, a stove, and a pigsty address vernacular culture.

Only six ceramics, however, represent the period between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries. Fifteen ceramics can be dated to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). In addition to plates, bowls, and jars, there are also a sculpture of a Guanyin and two sculptural roof tiles. By far the largest number of objects, 102 porcelain vessels, date to the Qing dynasty (1644–1912). Bowls, plates, and vases give an overview of the porcelains collected and used in literati circles and at court (fig. 1).

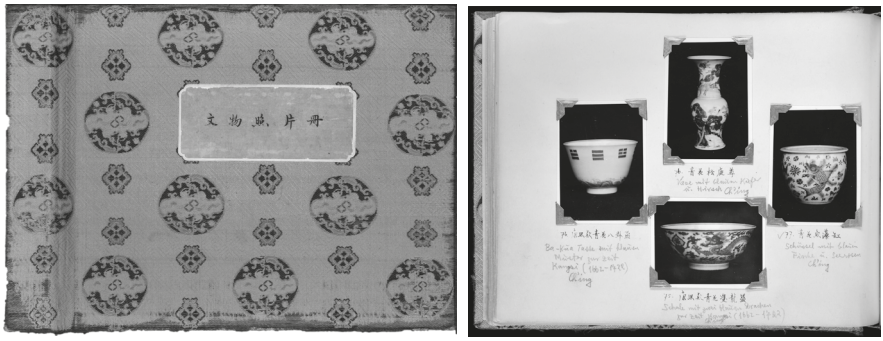

Figure 3. Chinese catalogue with black-and-white photographs, cover and inside page with Qing dynasty porcelains. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, photo (right): Claudia Obrocki. (See plate 21, p. 258)

The forty-seven textile objects, woven fabrics, fans, bags, and silken bands, ten utensils made in different enamel techniques, ten jade carvings (fig. 2), and nine pieces of lacquerware which demonstrate a range of different lacquer manufacturing techniques, all date to the last imperial dynasty, the Qing (1644–1912). Certainly, the selection reflects not least the availability and dispensability of objects.

Ritual vessels made of bronze, which Voigt had always listed first in his compilation of suggestions and which were particularly significant to him, were not part of the donation. Such bronze vessels are among the oldest collectibles. Often showing cast inscriptions, they were valued equally as testimonies of history and as aesthetic treasures. They were regarded as treasures that conferred identity and served rulers as emblems of power and authority. It is therefore not surprising that China did not give away such objects. Why no copies of paintings were provided is, however, less explicable. As far as contemporary art from the PRC is concerned, which was also high on Voigt's wish list, there were obviously other plans on the Chinese side. An exhibition with this content was put together almost in parallel and was shown the following year, also at the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.[21]

Accompanying and documenting the donation, the Chinese side prepared a two-volume catalogue bound in brocade (fig. 3). One volume showed black-and-white photographs of all objects with brief captions, and the second volume gave more detailed descriptions including date and place of origin for all items. The Ostasiatische Sammlung edited a catalogue later, in 1960, the year following the handover. Unfortunately, the modest publication gives only an inadequate impression of the significance of the gift. The thin brochure lists all the works with their technical details, based on the aforementioned Chinese compilation, but reproduces only thirty-two of them in black-and-white photographs. The objects are arranged chronologically and according to materials or media. The chronological order of the catalogue allowed for the chapters to be opened with short introductions to Chinese history, which, at the same time, made the catalogue a handbook on cultural history, albeit a concise one. This was not least in keeping with the

educational mission that the museum and its exhibitions were to fulfil 'for mutual understanding, creative cultural cooperation, and everlasting friendship with the great Chinese cultural people and their socialist people's government.'[22]

The catalogue included erroneous aspects: on the title page, contemporary painting is listed, which frequently leads to the misconception that painting of the time was also part of the gift. Paintings by living Chinese artists were, however, actually purchased from China.[23] They were exhibited alongside the donation in the most representative and largest gallery, the last of the exhibition rooms. Contemporary art always played a crucial role in all the exhibit concepts for the museum. In propagandistic tones, it was praised as an achievement of the new society:

> National liberation and the abolition of capitalist exploitation inspired art, which has become an expression of the victory of socialism […] the new is not sought through sensational effects, but through intensive study of the environment, the theory of socialism, the laws of art and through mastery of craftsmanship, artistic effect is achieved.[24]

Unfortunately, only few images of the exhibition *Four Thousand Years of Chinese Ceramic and Porcelain*, which opened at the Pergamonmuseum on 28 November 1959, have been handed down (fig. 4). But the arrangement of the exhibition is reflected in a description Voigt gave in a newspaper article.[25] The artworks were set up in chronological order, starting with Neolithic and Shang and Zhou dynasty ceramics in the first room and ending with the handicrafts of the Qing dynasty. The interpretation of the objects was embedded in the socialist narrative of history. Referencing the works from the Qing dynasty, Voigt stated: 'They prove that the foreign rulers had to continue the traditions of Chinese art, that Chinese artists and craftsmen and the national consciousness of the people were stronger than their oppressors.'[26] In addition to contemporary paintings, the display in the big hall at the end of the suite of galleries also included a number of modern ceramics.

The objects from the donation formed the basis for the permanent display of Chinese art in the galleries of the Ostasiatische Sammlung in the north wing of the Pergamonmuseum during the following decades. Over time, works from other acquisitions were gradually added.

Generally, the press broadly covered the exhibition of the gift. The museum's director, Bruno Voigt, had penned most of the articles himself. He emphasised that the donation enabled the museum to present an almost complete view of the development of Chinese ceramics and porcelain. On this basis, the history of the country could be introduced in general terms. The Chinese achievement of having produced the earliest porcelain provided the rationale for the focus on ceramic development. The museum's mission to educate visitors and to link historical and art historical education to sociopolitical instruction was underlined throughout the articles. In keeping with the spirit of the times, the donation was

Figure 4. Later Chinese porcelains in the exhibition *Four Thousand Years of Chinese Ceramic and Porcelain. Gift of Friendship of the People's Republic of China*, Pergamonmuseum, 1959 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.

emphasised as a testimony to the friendly relations between the two countries and as a contribution to a better understanding of the history and culture of China.[27]

Finally, I want to return to the original question that led me to the research about the history of the donation. The complete circumstances of the donation remain unclear and still require further research. Where did the objects included in the gift come from? Who selected them and according to what criteria?

As for the decorative art pieces from later historical periods, small signs on the bottom of some vessels provide a first indication. They are printed with the name 故宫博物院 (Gugong Bowuyuan), Palace Museum, with the additional character 新 (*xin*), which means 'new'. These objects come from the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing. 'New' means that they found their way into the museum after 1949 and were not part of the original imperial collection. Numbers and the character 德 (*de*) for Germany have been added by hand (fig. 5). Initial research with Beijing colleagues of the Palace Museum in 2017 showed, however, that only sixty-nine items with reference to the transfer to the museum in the GDR were documented in the archive there. The provenance of the other 182 works of art, before they came to Berlin, remains unknown. A handful of them bear labels from a Beijing dealer in Liulichang, a famous traditional quarter with numerous antique and artistry dealers. Even the prices are still visible on the small stickers

Figure 5. Lidded box in the form of a peach with inventory labels of the Palace Museum Beijing, China, Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), eighteenth century, inv. no. OAS 1959–245 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, photo: Ricarda Brosch. (See plate 22, p. 259)

on the bottom of the jars. The archaeological items bear numbers and characters indicating information that is probably related to archaeological sites. In the catalogue the Chinese side provided, the place of excavation is only indicated for some of them. Even in these cases, no date and no precise identification of the relevant excavation campaign are given. With a considerable number of objects, all information related to their origin is completely missing. To pursue their provenance will only be possible to research in close cooperation with colleagues in China.

The gift from the PRC was indeed an extraordinary gesture of friendship and solidarity between China and the GDR. There were rumours that the GDR planned to donate German artworks in exchange; there is also evidence that these were intended to be graphic prints. This would, however, need to be verified by further research. These plans probably ended up being cancelled due to the deterioration of political relations between the Soviet Union and the PR of China, which promptly affected relations between the GDR and China.

Looking at the event, one cannot help but think of the practice of tribute gifts, which were an essential part of Chinese foreign policy for centuries. In the 1950s, however, this practice took on a different character. Communist China had a difficult time on the international stage and struggled for diplomatic recognition. The achievements of the country's millennia-old culture thus had to serve as the role of ambassador for the new China. They were used to strengthen relationships and encourage understanding. Shen Yanbing, Minister of Culture of the People's Republic of China (Tchën Yän-bing/Mao Dun, 1896–1981), stated in the letter to his fellow minister, Alexander Abusch (1902–1982): 'We would be pleased if these cultural objects could serve to deepen the mutual understanding and cultural exchange between the Chinese and German peoples as well as the scientific research of the archaeologists and orientalists of the German Democratic Republic.' Further, he asked that 'this gift be received as a symbol of the everlasting friendship between our two countries.'[28]

Similar donations were also granted to other socialist countries. To date, I am aware of gifts to Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Hungarian People's Republic. In the mid-1950s, the National Gallery in Prague received six-

ty-five premodern artworks that were officially inventoried in 1958. According to Michaela Pejčochová, to whom I owe this information, an unusual process lies behind the donation: the gift was based on objects that official Czechoslovak delegates bought or received in China in 1953 or 1954. However, they were prevented from taking them out of the country due to the law on protection of cultural relics. Subsequently, Chinese authorities confiscated the objects and handed them over to the Palace Museum, where Chinese experts researched and described them on registry cards. Sixty-five artworks were then finally handed back to the Czechoslovak authorities and donated as an official gift to the National Gallery in Prague.[29]

In 1955 the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts in Budapest received an enormous donation of 575 works, consisting of seven hundred objects, as a gift from the Chinese Central Government that were part of a touring exhibition of the PRC. The donation, delivered in twenty-two crates, contained contemporary objects: Chinese pottery from Jingdezhen and Shiwan, as well as lacquerware and cloisonné enamel from Beijing, a variety of textiles and jewellery, ivory, and soapstone carvings, and even furniture. According to Györgyi Fajcsák[30], 'Its greatest value, however, unquestionably lies in the fact that the gift represents a cross section of mid-twentieth-century Chinese applied art.'[31]

A special case seems to be donations to the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch, New Zealand. New Zealand was never a country one would particularly associate with the Eastern bloc, but the China expert Rewi Alley (1897–1987) managed to mediate the donations, probably to a great degree thanks to the esteem in which he was held in China. Alley was a New Zealand writer and political activist who lived in China for most of his live and was labelled as one of the 'Ten International Friends of China' that China awarded in 2009. He was an active collector and donated his private collection to the Canterbury Museum. In addition, he managed to arrange official gifts from the Chinese side to the Canterbury Museum. Roger Duff (1912–1978), the museum director at the time, described the gift to the New Zealand press as follows:

> For the first time in its history, the People's Government of China has granted a special permit for the export of such items. They are valuable old pieces of porcelain, jade, bronze, and scroll paintings. With a very large collection of books on Chinese art, they fill seven large crates, now awaiting direct shipment by a Chinese vessel.[32]

The donation was followed by several other gifts of objects of decorative art in the late 1950s. A concrete number is not given, but Alley's collection and objects related to it are presented and edited in detail on a website.[33] Under the title 'China, Art and Cultural Diplomacy' in-depth searches are possible. 'Gifts and Exchanges' lists, for instance, about a dozen pieces given by the Palace Museum in Beijing.[34]

Presumably, there are other donations from the PRC of which I am not yet aware. It would be a rewarding project to investigate the worldwide efforts of China in the field of cultural diplomacy with a focus on the gifts of artworks and cultural relics to different countries. In a world of increasing tensions and demarcations, the aspect of cultural diplomacy, which focuses not only on one's own interests but equally on those of the partner's side, might provide inspiring impulses.

NOTES

1. The collection was never returned. It is today kept in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and possibly in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow. Staff of the then Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst (Museum of East Asian Art) had the chance to visit the Hermitage in 2002, and they inspected part of the collection kept there.
2. For more information on the history of the museum, see Herbert Butz, *Wege und Wandel: 100 Jahre Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst* (Berlin: Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, 2006).
3. Kurt Schifner, Letter to Ludwig Justi, general director of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 18.08.1951, in: SMB OAS, II VA 806. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
4. Theo Piana, Letter to the Staatliche Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten, HA Bildende Kunst, 23.08.1951, in: SMB OAS, II VA 806. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
5. The Director's Conference is a body of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin in which all directors of the museums and institutes of the SMB meet once a month for consultation.
6. Beschluß-Protokoll Nr. 1/52 über die erste Direktorenkonferenz am 24. April 1952 [Decision minutes no. 1/52 of the first Director's Conference], 24 April 1952, in: SMB ZA, II A/NG 0339, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
7. Martin Klar, Handwritten note, 13.05.1952, in: SMB OAS, II VA 806, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
8. Käte Finsterbusch studied Sinology at Leipzig University, with a focus on Chinese archaeology and palaeography. Käte Finsterbusch, 'Das Verhältnis des Shan-hai-djing zur bildenden Kunst' [The Relationship of the Shan-hai-djing to Visual Arts] (PhD diss., Leipzig University, 1950).
9. Bruno Voigt was born in Gotha and studied at the Akademie für Bildende Künste (Academy of Fine Arts) in Weimar. He campaigned against the Nazis in the 1930s with satirical drawings and graphics and was banned from working in 1933. After his return from captivity, he was active in cultural politics. In 1951 Voigt became director of the Staatliche Museen in Gotha. He was appointed director of the Ostasiatische Sammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, in 1954. 'Kurzbiographie: Bruno Voigt 1912–1988', retrieved 24 March 2022, http://www.hebecker.com/voigt/biographie.htm.
10. Unidentified author [Theo Piana?], Letter to the Staatliche Kommission für Kunstangelegenheiten, HA Bildende Kunst, Abt. Kunstsammlungen und Ausstellungen, Hauptreferent Schifner, 16.06.1952, in: SMB OAS, II VA 806, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
11. Bruno Voigt, Letter to Theo Piana, administrative director, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 04.10.1952, in: SMB OAS, II VA 806. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
12. A letter by Wang Yi 王毅 suggests that he was an employee at the Palace Museum in Beijing, 北京故宫博物院. Wang Yi, Letter, 27.12.1962, in: SMB OAS, VA 9237, Externer Schriftwechsel 1954-1975, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
13. Bendix and Schwendtke, Gesellschaft für Kulturelle Verbindungen mit dem Ausland, Reiseplan für die Delegation chinesische Museumsfachleute Herr Wang Chen-to Herr Wang-I [sic!] [Travel itinerary for the delegation of Chinese museum specialists Mr Wang Chen-to Mr Wang-I], 28.01.1955, in: SMB OAS, II VA 806. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
14. *'Guo-hwa* – die zeitgenössische Malerei Chinas', exhibition of the Ostasiatische Sammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 16.09.1957 – 01.01.1958.
15. Bruno Voigt, Letter to the Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, Fachreferat China, 27.06.1957, in: SMB OAS, VA 9238, Schriftwechsel extern bzgl. Ausstellungen, 1955-1975, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
16. The Turfan Collection is named after the first of four royal Prussian expeditions conducted between 1902 and 1914 to the northern Silk Road, in particular to the city of Turpan – today's Uygur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang in the PRC. The Turpan Collection's murals, paintings on fabric and paper, clay and wood sculptures, and manuscripts of the third to thirteenth centuries originate for the most

part from Buddhist temples. Today they form a crucial part of the collection of the Museum für Asiatische Kunst. Large parts of this collection are presently on display in the galleries of the museum in the Humboldt Forum, with two reconstructed cave temples at the centre of the exhibitions.

17. Bruno Voigt, Letter to the Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, Fachreferat China, 27.06.1957, in: SMB OAS, VA 9238, Schriftwechsel extern bzgl. Ausstellungen, 1955-1975, in Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
18. Bruno Voigt, Letter to the Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, Länderreferat China, Vorschlagsliste der aus der Volksrepublik China zu entleihenden Kunstgegenstände [list of proposals for loans of art works from the People's Republic of China], 26.01.1957, in: SMB OAS, VA 9238, Schriftwechsel extern bzgl. Ausstellungen, 1955-1975, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
19. Bruno Voigt, Letter to the Embassy of the GDR in the People's Republic of China, 29.10.1958, in: SMB OAS, VA 9238, Schriftwechsel extern bzgl. Ausstellungen, 1955-1975, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Zentralarchiv.
20. Tchën Yän-bing [Shen Yanbing/Mao Dun, Minister of Culture of the People's Republic of China], Dschang Hsi-jo [Zhang Xiruo, Chairman of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries], Letter, 28.07.1959 [date in publication 25.07.1959], German translation published in: *Geschenke der Volksrepublik China: Keramik und Porzellan aus vier Jahrtausenden, Seidenwebereien, Stickereien, Lack-, Emaille-, Jadearbeiten, zeitgenössische Tuschmalerei* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1960), 1 (exh. cat.).
21. 'Zehn Jahre Malerei und Grafik der VR China', Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ostasiatische Sammlung, opening 21.06.1960, until 16.11.1960[?], no catalogue.
22. Alexander Abusch [Minister of Culture of the GDR], 'Freude und Dank', in *Geschenke der Volksrepublik China: Keramik und Porzellan aus vier Jahrtausenden, Seidenwebereien, Stickereien, Lack-, Emaille-, Jadearbeiten, zeitgenössische Tuschmalerei* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1960), 2 (exh. cat.).
23. Mainly in the years 1957 and 1958, the museum acquired dozens of paintings by contemporary artists – namely, Qi Baishi, Li Keran, Fu Baoshi, and Wang Xuetao. The acquisitions were made through the Karl-Marx-Buchhandlung in East Berlin. Due to the deterioration of political relations, trade declined in the following years. The last acquisitions through this source were made in 1960.
24. Bruno Voigt, 'Tat ohne Beispiel. Geschenk der Volksrepublik China an die Staatlichen Museen', in *Neues Deutschland*, 30.01.1960, supplement no. 5.
25. Voigt, 'Tat ohne Beispiel'.
26. Voigt, 'Tat ohne Beispiel'.
27. Voigt, 'Tat ohne Beispiel'; Bruno Voigt, 'Die Ostasiatische Sammlung. Eine neue Abteilung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin', in *Berliner Zeitung*, 04.12.1960; Bernt Karger-Decker, 'Kostbare Geschenke aus China', in *Berliner Abendblatt*, date not identified; Elmar Jansen, 'Kunstschätze aus vier Jahrtausenden: Wertvolle Geschenke aus China an die Staatlichen Museen in Berlin', in *Neue Zeit*, 02.12.1959.
28. *Geschenke der Volksrepublik China: Keramik und Porzellan aus vier Jahrtausenden, Seidenwebereien, Stickereien, Lack-, Emaille-, Jadearbeiten, zeitgenössische Tuschmalerei*, 1.
29. Michaela Pejčochová, 'Stones from Other Mountains. Collecting and Exhibiting Chinese Art in Central Europe, from Rudolf II to the Communist Era', in *Orientations* 4, no. 52 (2021): 2–9; Michaela Pejčochová, *Sto let jednoho stromu. Lubor Hájek a institucionální sběratelství asijského umění v Československu* [One Hundred Years of a Single Tree. Lubor Hájek and Institutional Collecting of Asian Art in Czechoslovakia] (Brno: Books & Pipes, 2021), 79–84.
30. Dr. Györgyi Fajcsák was the curator of the Chinese collection of the Hopp Ferenc Museum of Asiatic Arts from 1989. Since 2007 she has been the director of the institution.
31. Györgyi Fajcsák, 'The Chinese Collection', in *Collecting Chinese Art in Hungary from the Early 19th Century to 1945: As Reflected by the Artefacts of the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts* (Budapest: Department of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, 2007), 35–38. I am indebted to the author for pointing out her article.
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33. 'Index', *China, Art and Cultural Diplomacy*, retrieved on 1 July 2022, http://www.rewialleyart.nz/.
34. 'Gifts and exchanges', *China, Art and Cultural Diplomacy*, retrieved on 1 July 2022, http://www.rewialleyart.nz/exhibits/show/presents-from-palace-museum.

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SAVED FROM THE FURNACE, THROWN INTO THE COLD WAR: ISLAMIC ART IN HUNGARY IN THE 1950S

Iván Szántó

Hungarian post-war museology experienced dramatic ruptures and experimented with strategies to offset them. Like most of the countries that were facing Sovietisation, Hungary suffered severe losses in human and material resources. Many private collections disappeared or were scattered, often sharing the fate of their owners.[1] After 1945, the situation of state institutions stabilised in some respects, but this happened at the expense of private collections: as noble estates and a significant part of ecclesiastical collections were liquidated and nationalised, many former well-to-do urban collectors were also evicted, and their possessions taken over by the state. The more fortunate ones, among them Edmund (Ödön) de Unger (1918–2011), the would-be founder of the Keir Collection, were allowed to emigrate.[2] The imposition of mandatory state registration on art objects destroyed the previous market structures and blocked the circulation of artifacts, while it was also a means of exerting pressure, which forced owners in dire financial situations to sell or donate their valuables to the state.[3] Conversely, some museums, libraries, etc., saw a net growth in their holdings after the war, despite the fact that these, too, were often decimated in 1944-5. These increases and changes necessitated the application of professional criteria for storage and cataloguing, even as academic standards were subordinated to displays of adherence to the Stalinist model. For example, during the liquidation of large private libraries, a committee was created, which strove to redistribute the acquired volumes according to a bibliographic system, thus laying the foundation for Hungary's network of public and specialised libraries that still operates today.[4] Similar considerations prevailed in the transformation of museum collections, such as when, starting in 1951, the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asian [then Eastern Asiatic] Art carved out an independent Middle Eastern collection unit.[5]

Given that until the 1940s, non-European collections were largely shaped by private connoisseurs, the sudden increase of public collections in this field, in principle, gave the new regime opportunity to put forward previously unseen

thematic exhibitions. In the first years after the war, however, financial and ideological constraints choke the life out of any potential projects outside of socialist realism. Museums, at most, could start organising and sorting their new acquisitions behind the scenes, and intensive restoration work was also carried out, thanks to which many seriously damaged works of art, including Islamic objects, were preserved. During these years, some socialist realist artists of Hungarian origin were able to reconnect with their homeland after decades-long Soviet emigration, armed with experiences they had gained during the Sovietisation of the art of, among other areas, the Central Asian republics. Such was Béla Uitz (1887–1972), for example, who assumed the lead role in creating a top-down artistic identity for Soviet Kyrgyzstan in the 1930s.[6] Atheist dissidents banished from Muslim countries, like the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, were given a hero-like reception in Hungary and accorded with the highest state awards.[7] The gap between the ideological hostility towards material vestiges of a seemingly defunct age of spirituality and the sudden wealth of newly acquired art treasures that the new regime brought into public ownership was yet to be bridged.

The death of Joseph Stalin (5 March 1953) and ensuing changes in the Hungarian party leadership galvanised this moribund museum scene. Isolated and destitute, the government allowed pre-war figures of non-European academic fields back to the fore as it was eyeing their unique international contact network even more than their linguistic and cultural expertise. This extremely narrow and confidential circle included, for instance, Ervin Baktay (1890–1963), who not only had professional but also family ties with the upper circles of India through his niece, the painter Amrita Sher-Gil (1913–1941).[8] In a 1942 book, written during the height of anti-Soviet war efforts in Hungary and the Japanese occupation of Burma, Baktay envisioned the near fall of British India.[9] A year after the war, he was appointed deputy director of the East Asian Art Museum and keeper of its Indian and South-East Asian collections, a post he kept until 1958. In this capacity, he was able to organise an exhibition of Indian art already in 1951, celebrating India's independence, which remained open until 1953, when some of it would be shown in the countryside.[10] A similar but much younger and more controversial figure was Ernő Hetényi (1912–1999).[11] Already in the 1930s, he came into contact with Buddhism through the originally India-based but German-founded Arya Maitreya Mandala order, and then, in 1952 – without doubt at the behest of the Hungarian Working People's Party – he established its pendant, the Budapest Buddhist Mission, which still operates today.[12] A Buddhist mission in anti-clerical Hungary gave Hetényi the opportunity to nurture his previous professional relationships, authenticate the state principle of religious freedom, and monitor members or would-be members. Gyula Germanus (1884–1979) undertook similar tasks in the Islamic area. In the spirit of his teacher, the 'pseudo-dervish' Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913), he (supposedly) converted to Islam in 1930, during a three-year trip to India, and then, almost immediately, in 1934, set out for the Hajj, during which he met King Ibn Saud.[13] He acted as a go-be-

Figure 1. Ervin Baktay (front right corner) and Géza Fehérvári (back, fourth from right) at a museologists' luncheon in Gyula, 5 May 1955 (After Géza Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában: Visszaemlékezések* (Budapest: Kairosz, 2008), 84).

tween between Prime Minister Count Pál Teleki (second term: 1939–1941) and Middle Eastern political figures and also served as the director of the Royal Oriental Academy until its closure in 1948.[14] Thanks to his former student, Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971), who advanced to become the leader of Communist Hungary, Germanus reemerged at the University of Budapest as a professor of Arabic studies. Moreover, similarly to, but in a more ostentatious way than the Buddhist Hetényi, he carefully built himself up as 'the' Hungarian ambassador of Islam, a one-man impersonation of Muslim piety, the heir of Vámbéry. He was allowed to publicly perform Muslim prayers in front of an Ottoman mihrab inside the mediaeval church near his apartment, while ordinary churchgoers risked retribution.[15] Although Germanus devoted much of his academic interests to Classical and Modern Arabic literature, he encouraged Géza Fehérvári (1926–2012, fig. 1), a young disciple of him, to study art history and helped him find a job in the Eastern Asiatic Arts Museum in 1952.[16] Fehérvári joined Edit Egyed (1928–1997, spouse of the ethnographer Vilmos Diószegi) who had just been entrusted with the cataloguing of its still unprocessed Islamic material, in addition to tracing and acquiring more objects from public and private holdings.[17]

Drawing on the experience of Baktay's India exhibition, their first project (1954) presented the art of South-East Asia and wished to contribute to what was prom-

Figure 2. Copper ewer. Iran, nineteenth century, Gift of the Mátyás Rákosi Iron- and Metalworks. Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asian Arts in Budapest, inv. no. 52.60.1. Photograph: Ferenc Balázs. (See plate 23, p. 260)

ulgated as the struggle of the peoples of French Indochina against imperialism.[18] Preceding this large-scale public display, Fehérvári and Egyed were involved in a more discreet and peculiar task which exemplifies the economic and cultural conditions of the period. According to the recollection of Fehérvári, the museum received sometime in late 1952 or early 1953 a notification from the Csepel Iron Works, then named after Mátyás Rákosi and directed by the brother of the latter, about the appearance of loads of old metalware in scrap metal shipments from the Middle East.[19] From time to time, the two museologists were called out to the Csepel Freeport, occasionally accompanied by the retired director of the museum, Zoltán Felvinczi-Takács (1880–1964), to examine the cargoes and sort anything worthy of salvage. In this way, several hundred bowls, vases, etc., were transferred to the museum.[20] These mostly represent eighteenth to twentieth century Egyptian and Levantine homewares but include Iranian objects as well (fig. 2).[21]

What can one make of this curious find? Fehérvári believes that the shipments arrived in energy-poor Hungary in response to the forced and barely sustainable post-war reindustrialisation goals.[22] True, supply difficulties of energy-demanding industries were chronic in 1950s Hungary which had to resort to bulk imports of scrap metal to feed the growing needs of its metallurgical plants.[23] But this does not explain the content of the shipment: even the material-deficient Hungarian economy did not need to rely on a few hundred or even a few thousand metal bowls. Despite the turbulent political links, Hungary maintained stable economic relations with Egypt, the probable source of most of the artifacts.[24] However, neither Egypt nor its neighbours were able to supply scrap metals in industrial quantity as they were even more scarcely provided with such raw materials than Hungary. In fact, statistics show that Hungarian exports to Egypt (industrial goods, including machine tools, railway carriages, and chemicals) far outweighed imports (ca. 40,000 bales of cotton annually) throughout the early 1950s.[25] Thus, other factors might be speculated to have been at play when these shipments landed ashore in Budapest. In particular, the Egyptian political upheaval of 1952 might be considered. Riots known as the 'Cairo fire' that killed dozens of Britons and pro-British persons and ransacking several hundred upmarket properties in Cairo broke out on January 26 1952.[26] Unfortunately, there are almost no Egyptian archival sources available even today for an accurate reconstruction of the events and this is why the degree of American and

Soviet involvements is unclear, despite the presumable role of both. On the other hand, the ensuing 'Revolution of Free Officers' between July 23 and 26 of the same year was carried out by US intelligence officers who would also orchestrate the overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddegh on 19 August 1953.[27] The new regime abolished the Egyptian monarchy on 18 July 1953 and ended 'foreign rule'; the deposed King Farouk fled the country and his collections were auctioned by Sotheby's in the Qubba Palace, one of his former residences, on 12 February 1954.[28] The repercussions quickly reached Egyptian museums. Gaston Wiet (1887–1971), the last foreign director of the Museum of Arab Antiquities was forced to resign as early as 1951 and his seat remained vacant for almost a year until the appointment of Zaki Muhammad Hasan (1908–1957).[29] The latter initiated sweeping reforms in the museum, renaming it Museum of Islamic Art, yet his French education, hallmarked by his lifelong advocacy for the ideals of European Enlightenment and the reconciliation of image-making and Islam, failed to win the trust of the country's new leaders who had him replaced with Berlin-trained Muhammad Mustafa.[30] Mustafa's new exhibition, under the title *Unity in Islam*, fit better for Nasserism.

In principle, countries in the Soviet Bloc regarded the nationalist developments in Egypt with suspicion and kept a distance from them. In practice, however, they did their best to maintain or even extend their interests there. This explains why Commander Gamal Salem (1918–1968), one of the Free Officers and Minister of Communications of the new government, suddenly appeared in Budapest in mid-1952, a few weeks after the coup, meeting with Chinese and Hungarian officials who assisted in Egypt's attempt to revoke Taiwan's formal recognition and establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China instead.[31]

We may never know whether the arrival of this unprecedented load of Islamic metalwork in the Iron Works was just a coincidence and it is safe to say that the objects originate from multiple sources: there is evidence of inconclusive negotiations between Hungary and Iran in 1953 about scrap metal purchases from the latter.[32] Be that as it may, it was not the last intimate episode between Communist Hungary and Islamic Art. In anticipation of momentous changes in the colonies, post-Stalin Oriental studies were being reorganised to disconnect them from their 'Bourgeois' nineteenth-century traditions in favour of an anti-imperialist stance.[33] Anti-imperialism and de-Stalinisation reached full bloom by 1955, the year of the Bandung Declaration. Western and Eastern powers outdid each other before and during the conference to court Third World countries that were increasingly aware of their growing authority. Newspapers and journals across the Eastern Bloc reported at length about the struggle of North African, South-West Asian, and other people for freedom.[34] Meanwhile, US-exile former Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy (1903–1979) toured Asian capitals before Bandung as the vice-president of the International Peasant Union (IPU) and convinced Ceylon Prime Minister John Kotelawala (1953–1956) to confront the audience of his speech with the revelation that European Soviet vassal states were protectorates as much as any dependent territory in Africa or Asia.[35]

It was during this global situation that the Museum of Applied Arts decided to organise an exhibition, entitled *Near and Middle Eastern industrial arts from more recent periods*, jointly with the Hungarian National Museum and the Museum of Ethnography. In the anti-clerical climate of the era, the idea faced some opposition and its ultimate victory reflected rifts within the ranks of the Hungarian Working People's Party. *Szabad Nép* [Free People], the official party outlet, reported that the exhibition had been opened at noon on Saturday, 19 March 1955, in the presence of excellences from the scientific and art community, state dignitaries, and members of diplomatic missions.[36] Turkologist-Mongolist Lajos Ligeti (1902–1987), vice-president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, gave the opening speech, followed by an award ceremony whereby a representative of the Ministry of Culture presented retired director of the Eastern Asiatic Arts Museum Zoltán Felvinczi-Takács with the award badge 'For Socialist Culture' in recognition of his 50 years of scientific work. 26 years earlier, Felvinczi-Takács was co-organiser of what was the last large-scale exhibition of Oriental art in Budapest up to that day.[37]

Those present, then, went through the exhibition which comprised 'thirteenth to nineteenth-century Egyptian, Syrian, *Mohammedan* [my emphasis], Persian, Turkish, Greek and Indian applied art.'[38] This eclectic list summarises the exhibition quite aptly. Mostly written by Fehérvári and Egyed but published anonymously, an accompanying booklet in a similar vein was available for visitors. 'Islam' as a term, too, appeared in the exhibition inconspicuously, hidden between the lines, like news commentaries were in the press. The wording of the title and what was omitted from it were carefully measured: it framed the exhibition in geopolitical, not religious, terms and it emphasised its materialistic, instead of its spiritual, qualities. The term 'more recent' had its importance, too: highlighting the period when traditional craftspeople were evolving into the modern industrial working class and when court art was giving way to more widely available crafts. Through this careful wording, the organisers could also leave in a benevolent obscurity the fact that Hungarian museums preserved very few outstanding objects from earlier periods, something which subsequent exhibitions of Islamic art would also have to reckon with (the majority of the objects were dating between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries).[39]

On the front cover of the guide, a cast steel deer statue from Qajar Persia is depicted in drawing (fig. 3).[40] This choice had its origin in an article about West Asian zoomorphic objects written by Edit Egyed in preparation for the exhibition: sculpture being the most corporeal and arguably least 'Islamic' genre of all, it might have offered itself as a good starting point for an unfamiliar audience, even though the article could not bring its readers close to the original purpose of these objects.[41]

After a brief outline of the Asiatic mode of production and the languid development of feudalism in Byzantium, the Sasanian Empire, and Khwarazm ('which flourished in the territory of today's Soviet Union'), the booklet summarised the Arab conquest of the Middle East which it explained with the overpopulation of Arabia and the desire of its elite for looting.[42] Although, the text goes on to say, the

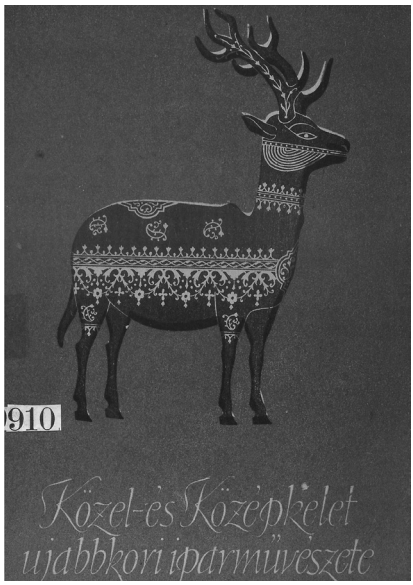

Figure 3. Front cover of *Közel- és Középkelet ujabbkori iparművészete,* exh. cat. [Museum of Applied Arts, 1955]. (See plate 24, p. 261)

conquests had a religious overtone, they were catalysed by a popular movement which established full-fledged feudalism in the annexed lands. In a somewhat apologetic manner, the authors claim that despite religious restrictions, this movement allowed individual creativity and national characteristics to manifest in art.[43] In support of this assumption, the role of subsequent conquests (Seljuq, Mongol, Ottoman) is discussed in the guide in a positive light, drawing attention to the assimilative qualities of these events and emphasising the extent to which Hungarian folk art is indebted to the Ottomans. The text identifies geometric ornament as the core of this artistic tradition which could nurture figural arts, 'chiefly in the more relaxed Shia territories.'[44]

Following this historical and aesthetic overview, the booklet guided the visitor through the exhibition.[45] As a gesture towards conquerors of the time, the first object was a furnished Kyrgyz yurt from the Soviet Union; the carpets inside the tent and in the neighbouring gallery suggested a progress in industrial development from nomad crafts to luxurious commodities for the international market. Besides three Mediaeval examples, the next section included Early Modern Islamic metalwork. Opposite, a set of Persian inlaid furniture, the Qajar steel animals, mentioned above, and mace heads were assembled in a group. In another corner, Indian metalwork (incised copper and Bidri ware) and textiles were exhibited, while separate cases were devoted to Persian, Syrian, and Spanish ceramics. Ottoman art was accorded an honoured position in the exhibition: not only carpets, horse trappings, arms and armour were displayed but, to allow a glimpse on popular life, also some Karagöz shadow puppetry. Recent finds from Ottoman Buda, Esztergom, and Eger extended the scope of the display to include Hungary and underline the commonalities between the two artistic traditions. The Ottoman section also included a partially assembled wooden interior from Damascus, dated 1802-3 CE (1217 AH) and acquired by the Museum of Applied Arts in 1885.[46] Towards the end of the visitor route, Persian arms, jewellery, and, as a last flash from early Islamic art, ceramic shards from Fustat (Cairo) could be seen.[47] Whether some of the metalware rescued from the Csepel Iron Foundry also appeared among the exhibits is unknown – but probably they did not.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

A bejárattól balra, a folyosó sarkán egy, a mai Szovjetunio belsőázsiai területéről, Kirgiziszténból származó sátor van felállitva. Ez a sátor a nomád pásztorok sátortipusai között a legfejlettebbet, a török-mongol pásztornépek jellegzetes lécvázra feszitett, nemezzel fedett kerek sátrát: a jurtot képviseli, melyet vándorláskor szétszedve teveháton szállitanak. A jurt úgy van felállitva, hogy szerkezetét és berendezését megfigyelhessük. A berendezésben első helyet foglal el a szőnyeg. A szőnyegkészités a Közel- és Középkelet iparmüvészetének talán legfontosabb és legjellemzőbb ága. A szőnyegkészités eredetileg ősi nomád müvészet, amelyet a család nőtagjai, de gyermekek és férfiak is üztek.A szőnyeg nemcsak disztárgy, hanem a berendezés fontos része, a lakás kényelmessé tételének legfontosabb eszköze.Csakhamar azonban a szőnyegkészités háziiparrá, majd manufakturális mühelyek tevékenységévé vált és nemcsak a lakosság kényelmét, hanem a kiváltságos osztály fényüzését, majd exportcélokat volt hivatva szolgálni. A szőnyegszövő készmüvesek sokszor nagylétszámu üzemekben dolgozva állitották elő e szőnyegeket. A szőnyegek diszité-

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Figure 4. Detail from *Közel- és Középkelet ujabbkori iparművészete,* exh. cat. [Museum of Applied Arts, 1955]. (See plate 25, p. 262)

The text concluded in an educative tone, suddenly addressed not to Hungarian visitors, but the Muslim world by saying that 'the exhibition aims to help these peoples get to know each other better.'[48] While this postscript was probably missed by most Muslim visitors, the first of the fourteen in-text line drawings in the publication was certainly not: it was the *basmala*, shown without translation or comment (fig. 4).[49] Interestingly, thus, while the guide did much to de-emphasise the Islamic aspect of this art (never describing it as such) for the local audience, it reached out to Muslims by selecting the opening phrase of the Qur'an as the only complete Arabic (and foreign) text in the entire publication. Given that the *basmala* appears without translation and explanation, it remained incomprehensible for the vast majority of Hungarian readers in the same way as the Hungarian text did so for foreigners and this enabled the text and image to strike different chords. Among the few potential Muslim visitors whom these messages might have been targeted one can reckon with Iranian refugees who fled to Hungary after the American coup of 1953.[50]

This hidden religious dimension of the overtly secular exhibition can be traced further in Géza Fehérvári's short report about it which appeared in *Islamic Review*, published by the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, in November 1955.[51] That 'the young Hungarian scholar of Arabic and *Muslim* [my emphasis] art' could publish it in the United Kingdom is more noteworthy than the summary itself; the most curious aspect of this feat, however, was that the article was submitted not to an academic or art journal but a Muslim missionary organ. Obviously approved by the Communist leadership of Hungary, and perhaps even encouraged by it, the article owed its existence to the mediation of Gyula Germanus who had been associated with the Woking Muslims since his presumed conversion.[52] While this connection has not been discussed in recent assessments of Germanus, it has been argued that his intermediary towards Islam was Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), whom he had met in Hungary through his founding chairmanship of the Hungarian PEN Club (1926–1930).[53] Tagore, on his part, had developed collaboration with the Lahore-branch of the Ahmadiyya movement which had dominated the Woking mosque for half a century.[54]

Proselytisation had been at the core of the Woking Ahmadiyya's European mission since 1913 when it had set out to spread Islam in Europe via converts from all walks of society.[55]

'Al-Hajj Prof. Dr. 'Abdul Karim Germanus' became the first, and for a while only, as well as by far the most prolific, contributor to the *Islamic Review* from the Eastern Bloc.[56] His activity started in 1951 with an inconspicuous note about the Arabic alphabet and continued with similar aphoristic musings until October 1956, i.e., the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis.[57] Concentrating on religious matters, interfaith dialogue, and Cold War politics, art was not of central interest for the *Review*, a few more contributions, nevertheless, did appear besides Fehérvári's note, including one article by Zaki Muhammad Hasan (by then an émigré in Baghdad), and a posthumous publication by David Storm Rice (1913–1962), Fehérvári's mentor in London.[58]

On the sidelines of the exhibition, Germanus received his first post-war invitation to the Arab World in May 1955; he was received by different members of the revolutionary government of Egypt, including President Nasser himself.[59] This underlines Germanus' stature within the Eastern Bloc.

Presenting about one thousand items, the exhibition remained open for six months and a cross-section was shown next summer in the newly opened castle of Siklós.[60] The location had a significance beyond itself. Personally captured by Sultan Suleyman I in 1543, this castle was witness to crucial events before, during, and after the Ottoman period.[61] Having been left by its hereditary owners in 1945, its archaeological survey and reconstruction by the state began in 1955. In itself, this would not have been enough for it to be the venue among the many Ottoman monuments in Hungary, but Siklós enjoyed the additional benefit of being located in strategic proximity to Yugoslavia. While the normalisation between the Soviet and Yugoslav state parties progressed at a good pace in 1955, the settlement of post-Stalin relations between Hungary and Yugoslavia proved to be difficult due to the extremely hostile relationship between Josip Tito and Rákosi until the latter's political fall in July 1956.[62] Meanwhile, the 'second line' tried to speed up the settlement of relations with various gestures, which was urged by Belgrade's newly gained key position in the non-aligned movement. This explains not only the sudden restoration of a peripheric monument on the Yugoslav border, but also the fact that a Middle Eastern exhibition popped up there. All at once, Hungarian cultural policy discovered Ottoman heritage in 1955 and appraised it like never before. While at Buda Castle, the memories of the Habsburg past were erased with lustful pleasure, some Ottoman monuments, which had been destroyed by the constructions of the Austro-Hungarian period, were being rebuilt from scratch.[63] In 1955, Fehérvári was commissioned to excavate Szigetvár Castle, the site of Sultan Suleyman's death, and to convert the shoe factory operating there into a museum.[64] At the same time, his colleague, Géza Fehér (1917–2005), excavated in Buda, Esztergom, and Érd, while Győző Gerő (1924–2011, a student of Germanus) worked in Eger, Pécs, and Siklós.[65] In the

next year, Fehérvári was given an opportunity for a one-month study trip to the Muslim regions of Yugoslavia.[66] Combined, these events draw a pattern, whereby Islamic art, including its local heritage, were viewed as a window to reach out to the Third World. In post-Stalinist Hungary, the Yugoslav model of politics was eagerly examined, down to its seemingly successful internalisation of the Bosnian 'Orient' which offered a blueprint to follow in heritage management.

This idealistic concept was shattered by the 1956 uprising, and then by the Soviet invasion. During the revolution and the Suez Crisis, Aladár Dobrovits (1909–1970), the Egyptologist director of the Museum of Applied Arts, undertook his first ever visit to Egypt and was preparing Fehérvári's follow-up visit there, scheduled for either the end of 1956 or the beginning of next year.[67] Fehérvári, however, took an active role in the political events during these very days and year's end would find him not in Egypt but in an Austrian refugee camp.[68] After 1956, Islamic art lost its previous relevance. It did not disappear completely from the exhibition scene of the decade, though. In 1958, an UNESCO-organised exhibition of colour reproductions of Persian paintings opened in the Institute of Cultural Relations, signalling a timid Hungarian return attempt to the international stage via Islamic art. The original paintings were in the Golestan Palace in Tehran and the Chehel Sotun Palace in Isfahan. Written by André Godard (1881–1965), the director of the Iranian Archaeological Institute, a four-page brochure in Hungarian was available for visitors which included a list of exhibited artworks.[69] It can be deduced from this list that the exhibition was not more than the display of images from a large coffee table volume by Godard and Basil Gray (1904–1989), published in 1956.[70] Although this event was a far cry from the 1955 exhibition, yet, as reported by *Népszabadság*, the post-revolutionary incarnation of *Szabad Nép*, it opened with a proper ceremony.[71] The speech was given by Professor Germanus – in a clear sign that even the upheaval of 1956 could not shake the most stable pillar of continuity. His opening remarks, thus, added yet another footnote to the story of how Hungarian Cold War rhetoric gave Islamic art a new lease of life; saving its artifacts first from the furnace and then from obscurity.

NOTES

1. László Mravik, ed. *The "Sacco di Budapest" and Depredation of Hungary 1938–1949* (Budapest: Hungarian National Gallery, 1998).
2. József Martin, *Iszlám művészet: Unger Ödön világhírű gyűjteménye a Manor House-ban / Islamic Art: Edmund de Unger's World Famous Collection in the Manor House* (Budapest: Mundus, 2010), 13.
3. For example, see Béla Kelényi, 'The History of "Modern" Persian Art Collections in Hungary, ' in *Artisans at the Crossroads: Persian Arts of the Qajar Period, 1796–1925*, eds Béla Kelényi and Iván Szántó (Budapest: Museum of Applied Arts and Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts, 2010), 144–145.
4. Ferenc Kégli, 'Adalékok könyvtárügyünk homályos éveiről, 1945–1949: az Országos Könyvtári Központ első évei és a körzeti könyvtárak szervezése.' *Könyvtári Figyelő*, no. 1 (2016): 34–50.
5. Kelényi, 'The History of "Modern" Persian Art Collections in Hungary', 145.
6. He worked there between 1936 and 1938. Zoltán Nagy, 'Uitz Béla kirgiziai hagyatéka és a szovjet monumentális művészet.' *Ars Hungarica* 1976, no. 2: 243–272; Zoltán Nagy, 'Uitz Béla Kirgíziában.' *Ars Hun-*

garica 1974, no. 2: 423–440, concerning his remarks about the International Congress of Iranian art (held in Leningrad in 1935), see 425.

7. James H. Meyer, *Red Star over the Black Sea: Nâzım Hikmet and his Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 299.
8. Baktay studied painting in Munich with his fellow countryman, Simon Hollósy, whose younger brother, fellow painter József Hollósy, was one of the first Buddhist converts in Hungary. Kelényi, 'The History of "Modern" Persian Art Collections in Hungary,' 140–145.
9. Ervin Baktay, *India szabadságot akar* (Budapest: Írás, 1942).
10. *India ötezer éves kultúrája*, Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts, June 2 1951 – 1 July 1953. The exhibition featured the permanent holdings of the museum which could be presented on a rotational basis only, in the form of thematic displays, due to the lack of space.
11. In the absence of reliable sources, a critical assessment of his career is still missing, to contextualise his numerous works on Buddhism and other Asian religions.
12. About the Arya Maitreya Mandala, see Martin Baumann, 'Culture Contact and Valuation: Early German Buddhists and the Creation of a "Buddhism in Protestant Shape"' *Numen* 44, no. 3 (1997): 276; Martin Baumann, *Der buddhistische Orden Arya Maitreya Mandala: Religionswissenschaftliche Darstellung einer westlich-buddhistischen Gemeinschaft*, Religionen vor Ort 3 (Marburg: Remid, 1994).
13. Adam Mestyan, 'Materials for a History of Hungarian Academic Orientalism: The Case of Gyula Germanus.' *Die Welt des Islams* 54, no. 1 (2014): 4–33. Concerning a ban on the pilgrimage of recent converts, especially from the West, issued in 1936 by the Saudi monarch, see William Ochsenwald, 'Islam and Loyalty in the Saudi Hijaz, 1926–1939.' *Die Welt des Islams* 47, no. 1 (2007): 16–17.
14. Adam Mestyan, '"I Have To Disguise Myself:" Orientalism, Gyula Germanus, and Pilgrimage as Cultural Capital, 1935–1965,' in *The Hajj and Europe in the Age of Empire*, ed. Umar Ryad (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 216–239.
15. He allegedly wrote the Arabic inscription which was visible on the mihrab until its recent restoration, although this is not discussed in the most recent essay about the mihrab; see Eszter Kovács, and Adrienn Papp, 'A mihrábfülke az újabb kutatások tükrében.' *Műemlékvédelem*, no. 6 (2010): 408, 412 note 3.
16. Géza Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában: Visszaemlékezések* (Budapest: Kairosz, 2008), 82–83; Iván Szántó, 'Géza Fehérvári (1926–2012).' *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 66, no. 3 (2013): 350; see also Yuka Kadoi, 'Fehérvári, Géza' in *The Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
17. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 83–84.
18. *Hátsó-India és Indonézia művészete*, Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts, 14 November 1953 – 10 April 1956.
19. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 83–84, for an overview of the metallurgical plant, its nationalisation and means of production, see Ákos Kugyela, 'A Weiss Manfréd konszerntől a Rákosi Mátyás Művekig: egy családi vagyon végnapjai.' *ArchívNet* 4, no. 6 (2004). Artifacts from the ancient world are not reported in the assemblage and the Museum of Fine Arts was not involved in the transfer. I am grateful for Katalin Kóthay (Museum of Fine Arts) for the information.
20. Tibor Horváth, ed., *A Hopp Ferenc Kelet-Ázsiai Művészeti Múzeum Emlékkönyve* [Handbook of the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts] (Budapest: Népművelési Propaganda Iroda, 1970), 105; Györgyi Fajcsák, ed., *Ázsia művészete: A százéves Hopp Ferenc Ázsiai Művészeti Múzeum gyűjteményei* (Budapest: Szépművészeti Múzeum and Hopp Ferenc Ázsiai Művészeti Múzeum, 2019), 239.
21. Béla Kelényi, and Iván Szántó, eds, *Artisans at the Crossroads: Persian Arts of the Qajar Period, 1796–1925* (Budapest: Museum of Applied Arts and Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts, 2010), exh. cat., nos. 4.2.14, 4.2.26.
22. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 83–84; for the industrial background, see Pál Germuska, 'A szocialista iparosítás Magyarországon 1947–1953 között,' in *Magyarország a jelenkorban: Évkönyv 9*, eds Éva Standeisky, Zsuzsanna Kőrösi, and János Rainer M. (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet, 2001), 147–172.
23. Nóra Fügedi, 'Magyar Kultúra a világban: Egyiptomi-Magyar kulturális Kapcsolatok 1945–1964.' *Acta Historica* (Szeged) 134 (2012): 143–151.
24. The two countries reestablished diplomatic relations to ambassadorial level in 1947, only to freeze them next year when the Hungarian ambassador, Viktor Csornoky, was recalled from his posting in Cairo and summarily executed for espionage allegations. László J. Nagy, 'Magyar-egyiptomi kapcsolatok a második világháború után (1947–1955) Hungarian–Egyptian Relations after the World War II (1947–1955).' *Belvedere* 3 (2015): 17–18. The first modest Hungarian effort in the 1950s to exhibit artworks in Cairo was a children's drawing exhibition planned for January 1952 at the Art Museum of Cairo, according to an embassy document (MOL – HU – MNL – OL – XIX – J 11a/003025-1951.XII.28).
25. J. Nagy, 'Magyar-egyiptomi kapcsolatok a második világháború után (1947–1955)', 18.
26. Harold Hindle James, 'Personal Report on Riots in Cairo, 26 Jan 1952,' n.d..
27. Michael T. Thornhill, *Road to Suez: The Battle of the Canal Zone* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2006), 88.

28. Anonymous, *The Palace Collections of Egypt: Catalogue of the Highly Important and Extremely Valuable Collection of Coins and Medals, the Property of the Republic of Egypt: Cairo, 24 February – 6 March, 1954* (London: Sotheby and Co., 1954).
29. Donald Malcolm Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt: Archaeologies, Museums, and the Struggle for Identities from World War I to Nasser* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2015), 167–196.
30. Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt*, 185–196.
31. J. Nagy, 'Magyar-egyiptomi kapcsolatok a második világháború után (1947–1955)', 21, the establishment of contacts in a Cairo apartment is recorded in an embassy report which is preserved in the Hungarian National Archives (HU – MNL – OL – XIX – J 11a/00160-1952 XI.1).
32. Hungarian National Archives, HU – MNL – OL – XIX – J 15a, no. 1, 00940/1/1953, in reference to a certain Dr. Aghavi and Sadeghiani, a trader, datable to mid-1953.
33. Michael Kemper, 'Propaganda for the East, scholarship for the West: Soviet strategies at the 1960 International Congress of Orientalists in Moscow,' in *Reassessing Orientalism: Interlocking Orientologies during the Cold War*, eds Michael Kemper and Artemy M. Kalinovsky (London: Routledge, 2015), 172.
34. Ottó Sütő, 'Francia Észak-Afrika népeinek harca a gyarmatosítók ellen.' *Társadalmi Szemle*, 1955, nos. 2–3: 199; György Göncöl, 'Bandung és a békés együttlétezés elve,' *Társadalmi Szemle*, no. 5 (1955): 85–97.
35. István Csicsery-Rónay, 'Nagy Ferenc missziója a bandungi konferencia idején,' in *Nagy Ferenc miniszterelnök: Visszaemlékezések, tanulmányok, cikkek*, ed. István Csicsery-Rónay (Budapest: Ezerkilencszáznegyvenöt Alapítvány and Occidental Press, 1995), 123–125.
36. Anonymous, 'Megnyílt a Közel- és Közép-Kelet újabbkori iparművészete című kiállítás,' *Szabad Nép*, 20 March 1955: 5.
37. Károly Csányi and Zoltán Felviczi-Takács, *Keleti művészeti kiállítás / Ausstellung orientalischer Kunst* (Budapest: Magyar Gyűjtők és Művészetkedvelők Egyesülete, 1929).
38. Anonymous, 'Megnyílt a Közel- és Közép-Kelet'.
39. This was, for instance, the rationale behind the 2010 exhibition of Qajar art in the same museum which displayed, to some extent, the same artifacts as the 1955 event. Géza Fehérvári presided over both exhibitions, the first one marking the beginning of his professional career and the 2010 one its end. When Fehérvári co-organised a further exhibition of 'later' Middle Eastern art in Hungary (at the castle of Keszthely) after the political changes of 1989, he labelled it as 'Islamic' without hesitation. Dzsehán Sz. Radzsab, Géza Fehérvári, Sándor Fodor, and Anikó Molnár, *Az iszlám világa: Az iszlám művészete a 18-20. században* (Keszthely: Helikon Kastélymúzeum, 2002).
40. Cf., Kelényi and Szántó, eds, *Artisans at the Crossroads*, cat. no. C.4.1.11.
41. Edit Diószegi-Egyed, 'Közelkeleti állatplasztikákról,' in *Az Iparművészeti Múzeum Évkönyvei*, vol. 2, ed. Aladár Dobrovits (Budapest: Iparművészeti Múzeum, 1955), 62–73; cf. Fellinger, Gwenaëlle, ed., *L'Empire des roses: Chefs d'œuvre de l'art persan du XIXe siècle* (Lens: Louvre-Lens / Gent: Snoeck, 2018), exh. cat., nos. 79–81.
42. Anonymous, *Közel- és Középkelet ujabbkori iparművészete* (Budapest: Museum of Applied Arts, 1955), exh. cat., 1–2. I am grateful to librarian Tünde Farkas for making accessible a copy of this publication in the now-closed Museum of Applied Arts.
43. Anonymous, *A Közel- és Középkelet*, 2–3.
44. Anonymous, *A Közel- és Középkelet*, 4–5.
45. Anonymous, *A Közel- és Középkelet*, 5–26.
46. Iván Szántó, 'Ein Damaskuszimmer in der Frühgeschichte des Budapester Kunstgewerbe-Museums.' In *Gezimmertes Morgenland. Orientalische und orientalisierende Holzinterieurs in Mitteleuropa im späten 19. Jahrhundert*, eds Maximilian Hartmuth and Julia Rüdiger (Vienna: Böhlau, 2021), 169–177; Iván Szántó, 'The Damascus Room, Lechner, and the Domestication of Oriental Space,' in *Ödön Lechner in Context: Studies of the international conference on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Ödön Lechner's death*, eds Zsombor Jékely, Zsuzsa Margittai, and Klára Szegzárdy-Csengery (Budapest: Museum of Applied Arts, 2015), 143–152.
47. Iván Szántó, 'Lajta's Collection of Oriental Ceramics,' in *Lajta Béla Virtuális Archívum*, ed. Tamás Csáki (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 2011).
48. Anonymous, *A Közel- és Középkelet*, 26.
49. Anonymous, *A Közel- és Középkelet*, 6.
50. About the establishement of an Iranian emigrant group in Hungary in 1953, see HU – MNL – OL – M – KS 276-98 in the the Hungarian National Archives.
51. Géza Fehéravári [*sic*], 'Islamic Applied Arts Exhibition in Budapest.' *Islamic Review*, October 1955: 16–20. I was unable to trace Fehérvári's other short report, published in Arabic in Damascus.
52. For an overview of the Woking Mission, see Gerdien Jonker, *The Ahmadiyya Quest for Religious Progress: Missionizing Europe 1900–1965* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Gerdien Jonker, 'A Laboratory of Modernity: The Ahmadiyya Mission in Interwar Europe,' *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 3 (2014): 1–25.

53. Mestyan, 'Materials for a History of Hungarian Academic Orientalism,' 21.
54. *Review of Religions* (vol. 20, no. 7, 1921), 281.
55. Jonker, 'A Laboratory of Modernity,' 1–25.
56. Other regional authors included Polish emigrants Stanisław Kościałkowski and Aslan Bohdanowicz, as well as Vienna-based Yugoslav Muslim emigré scholar Isma'il Balic whose article 'Traces of Islam in Hungary – Gulbaba's Mausoleum in Budapest' (1950), about a favourite topic of Germanus, appears like a preamble to writings by the latter which would start in the following year. The first article from the Soviet Union was E. A. Belaiev, 'Russian Orientalists and Russian Communists on Islam,' *Islamic Review*, October 1954: 12–14.
57. For the articles by Germanus see Appendix. While Germanus stopped sending his regular notes following the revolution of 1956, he appears among the contributors in Safa A. Khulusi, ed., *Islam, Our Choice* (Wembly: Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, 1961).
58. Zaky M. Hasan, 'The Lawfulness of Painting in Islam,' *Islamic Review*, June 1953: 29; David Storm Rice, 'The Fermo Chasuble of the Archbishop of Cantebury, St. Thomas Becket,' *Islamic Review*, September 1966: 19–22.
59. Germanus' report survives among the embassy papers (HU – MNL – OL – XIX – J 11a-4/0028-1955. V. 21). The visit has been linked with a Czechoslovak arms deal in Mestyan, '"I Have To Disguise Myself"', 233.
60. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 86–87.
61. Győző Gerő, 'Neuere Angaben zur Geschichte der türkischen Architektur in Ungarn: Die Malkotsch Bey Dschami in Siklós,' *Materiala Turcica*, vols. 7–8 (1981–1982 [1983]): 191–216.
62. Péter Vukman, 'Barátból ellenség – ellenségből barát (?): A magyar-jugoszláv párt- és államközi kapcsolatok (1945–1956),' in *Fejezetek a titói Jugoszlávia korai korszakából*, eds István Beszédes and Tibor Molnár (Zenta: Zentai Történelmi Levéltár, 2016), 45–79.
63. László Gerő, *A helyreállított Budai Vár* (Budapest: Műszaki, 1980), 24.
64. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 85.
65. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 85.
66. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 90–91.
67. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 94–95. These events can be added to the most detailed documentary collection of the entwined crises of Suez and Hungary; see János Sáringer, ed., *A szuezi válság és Magyarország – 1956: Diplomáciai iratok az 1956-os magyar forradalom és szabadságharc, illetve a szuezi válság történetéhez* (Budapest: Veritas, 2016).
68. Fehérvári, *Három nemzet szolgálatában*, 105.
69. André Godard, *Perzsa miniatúrák: reprodukciók* (Budapest: Pátria Nyomda, 1957).
70. Basil Gray, and André Godard, *Iran: Persian Miniatures: Imperial Library* (New York: Graphic Society, 1956).
71. Anonymous, 'Megnyitották a perzsa miniatúrák kiállítását,' *Népszabadság*, 31 July 1958: 7.

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APPENDIX

Articles by Gyula Germanus in *Islamic Review* (1951–1956):

'Observations on the Arabic Alphabet.' November 1951: 13–14.
'Modern Sa'udi Arabian Literature.' November 1952: 31–33.
'Arabic as a Language is Unique.' July 1953: 16.
'Muslim Geographers.' July 1954: 9–11.
'Napoleon and Islam.' August 1955: 30–32.
'Ibn Kathir on Husain Ibn Mansur al-Hallaj.' October 1955: 14–16.
'Aspects of Modern Arabic Literature.' December 1955: 28–32.
'Reflections on the Spirit of the Arabic Language.' October 1956: 14–15.

SOUTH ASIA IN POST-WAR PRAGUE

LUBOR HÁJEK AND INDIAN MODERNIST ART*

Zdenka Klimtová

In 2021 the Asian Art Collection at the National Gallery in Prague (NGP) celebrated two anniversaries: seventy years had passed since the collection was first established, and the same year also marked the centenary of the birth of its founder, Lubor Hájek,[1] who headed the collection from 1952 until his retirement in 1986.[2] He also deserves credit for establishing Asian art studies as a discipline in Czechoslovakia. Hájek's professional interests and publications covered a broad spectrum of topics. Hájek studied Indology and comparative religion. He also devoted considerable attention to Chinese and Japanese art, in connection with the collection's focus on East Asian art. As far as Indian art is concerned, in 1960–1962 Hájek published two monographs about Indian miniature painting.[3] He also played a crucial role in introducing the work of Indian modernists in Czechoslovakia. In this paper, I will specifically concentrate on this area of his activities to illustrate the ways the transregional exchange between South Asian modernist artists and Czechoslovakia took place from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s. Not only Prague but also other larger cities, such as Brno and Bratislava, hosted exhibitions of contemporary Indian artists during this period.

Hájek's career began with the end of the war. Czech universities were closed from 1939 to the end of the Second World War, so Hájek could not start studying until 1945. In that same year, he also became a founding member and acting editor of the *Nový Orient* (New Orient) magazine published by the Oriental Institute, a publication that continues to be produced to this day. Twenty-five years later, one of the other founders, Zdeněk Hrdlička (1919–1999), remembered: 'Hájek had the most experience and, in my opinion, gave the new magazine's content a refined and formally elegant structure' (fig. 1).[4]

By the first half of the 1950s, the NGP, on its own or in collaboration with other specialists, had held exhibitions on Chinese art, on Japanese graphics, and one on Indian sculpture.[5] The first large exhibition of modern and contemporary Indian art in Prague and Bratislava was held in 1955 and 1956 respectively. These were the first stops for a travelling exhibition organised by India's National Academy of Art – the Lalit Kala Akademi – in cooperation with the Czechoslovak side, comprising the Ministry of Culture, the NGP, and the Union of Czechoslovak

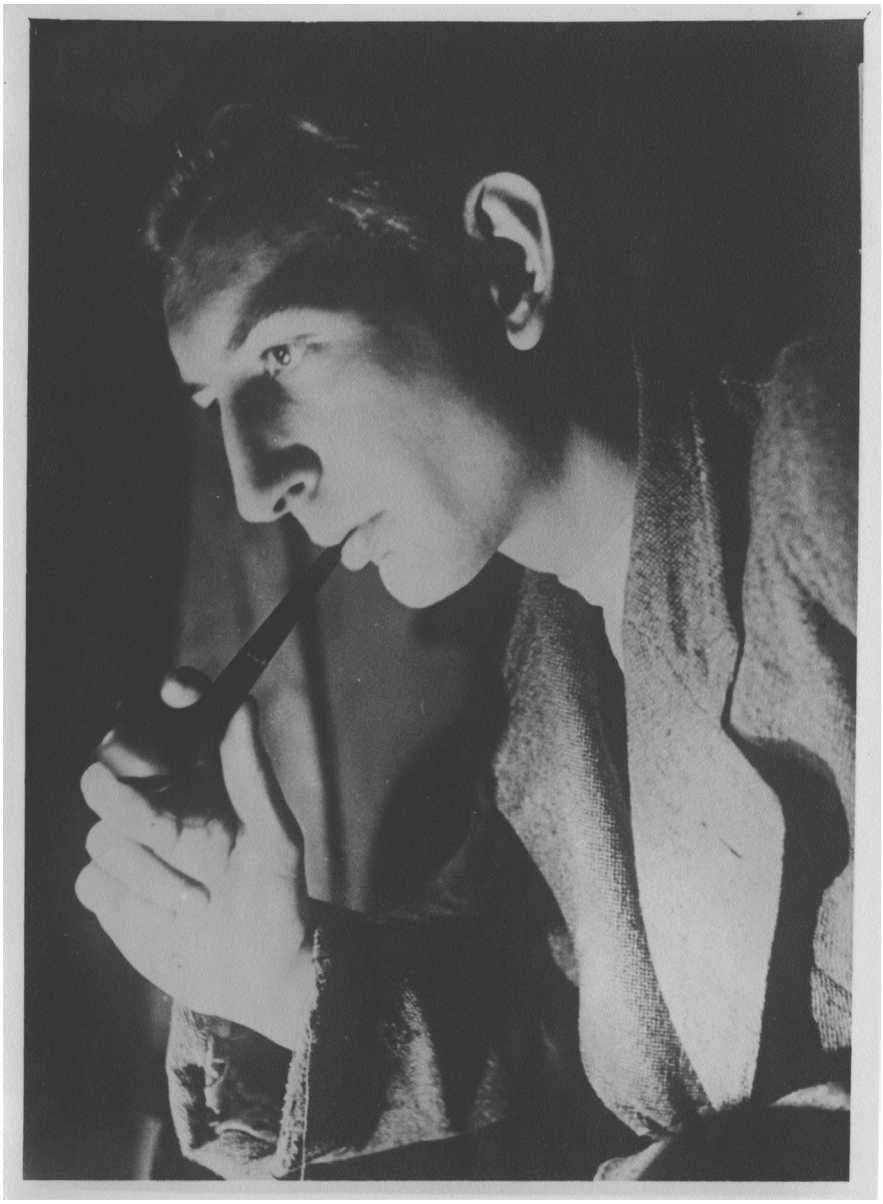

Figure 1. Photograph of Lubor Hájek. Ca. the second half of the 1940s. Black-and-white photograph. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, Fonds: Lubor Hájek. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

Fine Artists. The exhibition presented a substantial overview of twentieth-century Indian painting, with the main focus placed on contemporary art. Hájek wrote several articles about the exhibition, in which he also reflected on contemporary trends and possible stylistic developments. For instance, in the conclusion of one of these articles, he seemingly understood Indian art to be in a transitional phase:

> The themes, techniques, opinions, and forms are still going off in all directions, like the legs of a new-born foal. However, we can see a guarantee of future consolidation at this exhibition in that the vast majority of the artists believe Indian traditions should be used as the principal measuring stick and the main guideline for direction, even though they have not yet decided how to best approach it.[6]

The extent of Hájek's interest in Indian art of the 1950s becomes clear from his statement predicting possible developments:

> At this point, it would certainly be difficult to guess the direction that Indian art will take in the future, or which external influences it will accept and how it will adapt them. Nonetheless, it is possible, as well as educational, to explore the foundation laid by its national history and examine how today's Indian painter approaches this legacy.[7]

Hájek reflected on the same theme twenty-four years later during an exhibition of Indian art held in 1979.

The dizzying pace of the travelling exhibition illustrates how exhibition operations functioned at the time. It was open for a mere thirteen days in Prague (6–18 December 1955) and then another fourteen days in Bratislava (22 December 1955–4 January 1956).[8] The organisers had only four days to take down the exhibition in Prague, transport it, and set it up again in Bratislava.

The title page of the catalogue for this travelling exhibition features drawings by the Slovak graphic artist and illustrator Lubomír Kellenberger (1921–1971), which he dedicated to Hájek in Bratislava (fig. 2).[9] The artist's practice as a caricaturist cannot be denied: Hájek's distinctive profile is portrayed on the left, while in the upper part, there is a depiction of a man who is probably František Komzala (1898–1980), who at the time the exhibition was held, was the Czechoslovak ambassador to India (1952–1956); he had previously been the ambassador to China.

The NGP purchased ten paintings from the exhibition. The protocol prepared by the purchasing committee in 1956 states that after the exhibition had ended, paintings were selected for the NGP's collection at the instigation of the Minister of Culture in a way that would ensure that 'the best contemporary Indian artists, and also schools, are represented in this collection, so that the Czechoslovak Republic would have at least partial documentation of the state of contemporary Indian painting.'[10] The protocol continued: 'As this is a matter of importance for the cultural relations

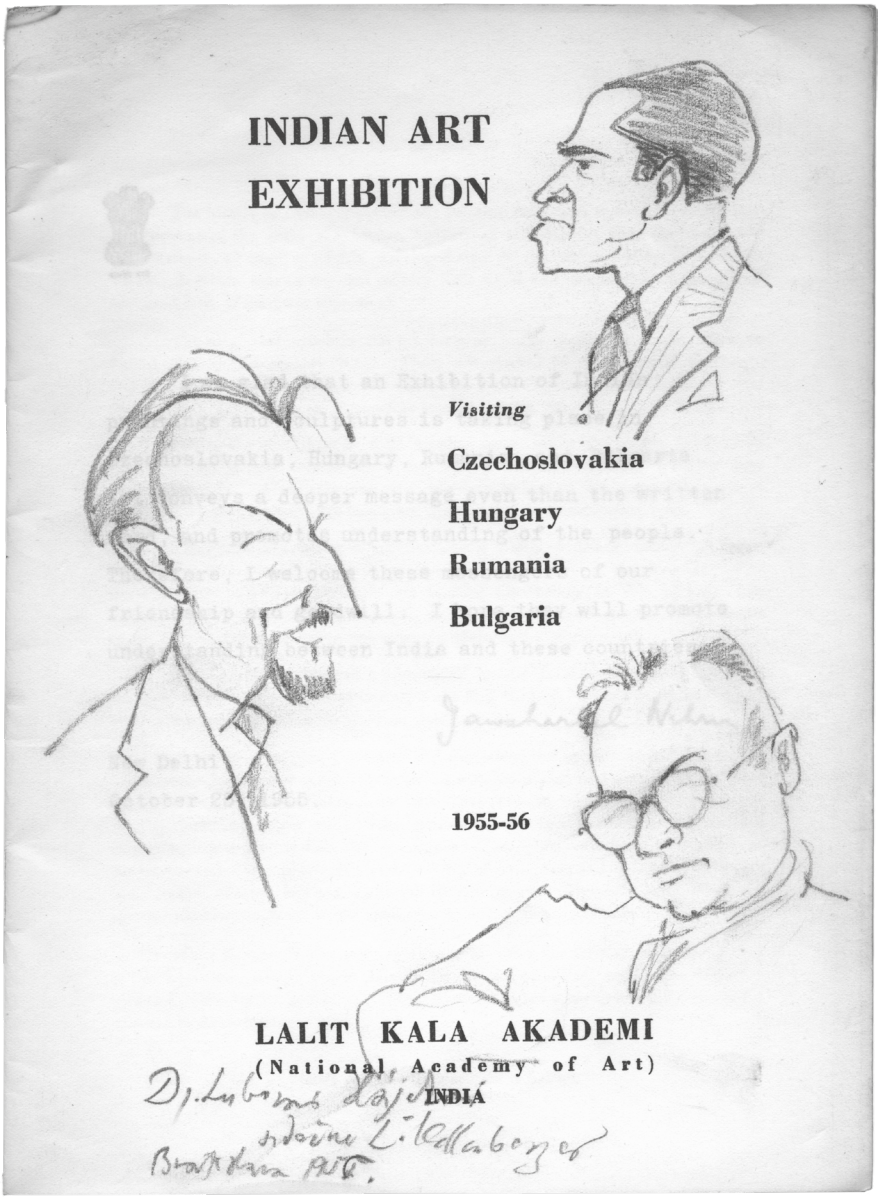

Figure 2. Title page of the catalogue for the travelling exhibition of Indian art, featuring drawings by Lubomír Kellenberger, 1955/56. On the left is a portrait of Lubor Hájek. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, Fonds: Lubor Hájek. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

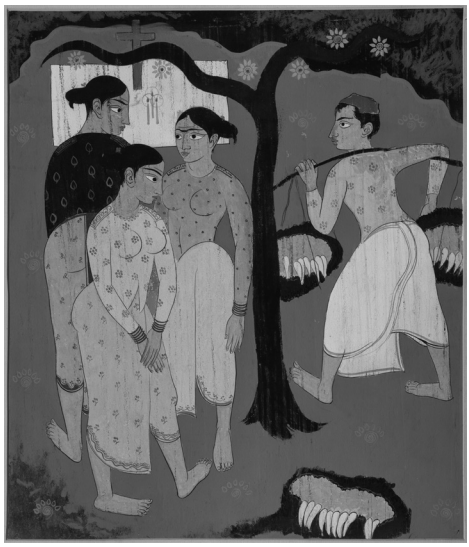

Figure 3. *Evening* by V. S. Gaitonde, probably early 1950s. Tempera on paper, 56 × 43 cm. National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 926. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague
(See plate 26, p. 263)

of both countries, the committee unanimously agrees with the purchase for the asking price'. There is a handwritten comment added by Hájek: 'The department submits photographs to the committee for evaluation, because the exhibition was a travelling one, and from Czechoslovakia it travelled through Hungary and Bulgaria and it is now in the USSR, and it seems it will later also be installed in Poland'.[11] After the end of the exhibition tour, the first works by contemporary Indian artists found their way into the NGP's collections.

Of this acquisition, six paintings have been preserved in the NGP's collection (fig. 3).[12] Four of the ten purchased paintings were destroyed in 1969 when the Asian Art Collection was caught in a fire at the château in Benešov nad Ploučnicí, where they were stored or temporarily exhibited at the time. All that remains of these early works by important Indian modernist artists are index cards with black-and-white photographs in the documentation.[13]

Another source of the acquisitions for the NGP's collections is associated with the study stays of Indian artists. One of the first such stays of an Indian modernist artist was that of Maqbool Fida Husain (1915–2011) in 1956. Husain came to Czechoslovakia at the invitation of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and he held an exhibition of his paintings and drawings at the Mánes Exhibition Hall in Prague. Although none of his works were acquired for the state's collections at that time, the artist established personal contacts that lasted for many decades. Husain returned to Prague often.[14] For instance, he designed a mural for Air India's Prague office, which was unfortunately removed in the 1960s.

The sculptor and graphic artist Ajit Chakravarti (1930–2005) studied at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague between 1957 and 1961, with Jan Kavan. In 1961 he exhibited his work in Prague's Old Town Hall. Hájek wrote the text for the exhibition catalogue. One of the things we learn from this text is that Hájek visited various art schools and followed the work of artists from Asian countries who were studying in Prague at that time.[15] Four prints and two sculptures were purchased for the NGP from Chakravarti's exhibition.[16] A sculptural portrait of Hájek by Chakravarti, which had been recorded in the exhibition catalogue and identified as a work by Chakravarti, was added to the collection in 2021.[17]

Bishamber Khanna (also born in 1930) studied graphic art techniques at the Prague Academy of Fine Arts from 1958 with Vladimír Pukl and Vladimír Silovský. He presented his work at an extensive exhibition held in Hollar Hall in 1960. This exhibition included paintings and drawings, but the greatest share comprised prints. While in Prague Khanna not only studied at the academy's studios but also attended typographic and reproduction institutions, where he learned printing and reproduction techniques.[18] The NGP purchased four of his graphic prints.[19]

As a rule, all exhibitions held outside the state galleries were organised and endorsed by the Union of Czechoslovak Fine Artists, which was the official organisation that united the members of individual artistic groups and significantly intervened in exhibition operations after 1948.

When Biren De (1926–2011) arrived for his study stay in 1975, he was an acknowledged artist who had already achieved a degree of international recognition. His paintings are labelled under the rubric known as neo-tantra, although he personally distanced himself from finding inspiration in tantric art. As he says in an interview with S. A. Krishnan in 1971:

> It is easy to confuse my paintings with some form of tantra art. I am not a cult painter, and my work is not the result of any esoteric practice. I am not certainly a tantric in this sense. But if you will agree that the essential objective of tantra is the discovery of the true nature of things, of self-realisation and identification of oneself with nature wholly, I am a tantric and so are you, and anybody.[20]

The NGP acquired three paintings Biren De made during his time in Prague.[21]

Another Indian artist whose work the Czechoslovak public had the opportunity to become acquainted with was Bhattacharya Chittaprosad (1915–1978). In 1963 his first retrospective exhibition of graphic art took place in Prague, and in the following year, the NGP purchased thirty-eight of his linocuts and woodcuts.[22] The artist lived in modest conditions in Bombay and did not travel abroad. Both the exhibition and the acquisitions came about thanks to the long-time contacts that existed between the artist and his Czech friends, although Hájek was less involved in this case. An article by Simone Wille on the topic of Chittaprosad's prints at the NGP within the context of Indo-Czech cultural relations in the post-war era was published in 2020 in the *Bulletin of the National Gallery in Prague*.[23] The article revisits the circumstances that were decisive for the promotion of Chittaprosad's art in Czechoslovakia starting in the 1950s. It describes the paths that cultural exchange followed as well as the priorities that existed at that time. The article is a follow-up to the extensive study that Simone Wille published in *Stedelijk Studies* in 2019.[24]

Although Chittaprosad distanced himself from the Communist Party of India in 1948, he continued to hold leftist convictions. This was the same year the Communists gained control of Czechoslovakia, a development reflected in the official

Figure 4. *Peace to All Children Around the World* by Bhattacharya Chittaprosad, 1952. Print from the series *Without Fairy-Tales*, linocut on paper, 30.5 × 29.6 cm. National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 2481. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See plate 27, p. 264)

stance to art and its ideologisation as well as in the selection of 'suitable' foreign artists. The themes found in Chittaprosad's art met the requirements: exploitation, oppression, and later also themes that gravitated towards folk art (fig. 4).

His friendship with the Indologist Miloslav Krása (1920–2004), who had been interested in Chittaprosad's art at least since the early 1950s, played an important role in the promotion of his work in Czechoslovakia. Starting in 1957, Chittaprosad became a frequent contributor to the previously mentioned *Nový Orient* monthly and its English counterpart – the *New Orient Bimonthly*, which was published only from 1960 to 1968. Krása also accompanied the director Pavel Hobl when he travelled to India in 1972 and shot his short film *Confession*, a filmic portrait about the artist, made in the artist's small and modest room in a Bombay suburb. The film subsequently received the World Peace Council Award at the International Documentary Film Festival in Leipzig, East Germany. Following Chittaprosad's death, three exhibitions were speedily organised between 1978 and 1981 in Prague, Litoměřice, and Brno. In 1986 the NGP lent a series of its prints for an exhibition held at the New Heritage Gallery in New Delhi.[25] Once again, it was Miloslav Krása who compiled documentation to accompany Chittaprosad's work, and this file was donated to the NGP.

Hájek and Krása also joined forces for another exhibition organised by the Union of Czechoslovak Fine Artists, this time at the U Řečických Gallery in 1967. Sixteen of Husain's paintings and eight drawings by Ram Kumar were shown. Nine years later, related to another of Husain's exhibitions in Prague, Hájek bemoaned in his notes the fact that he should have tried harder to obtain one of the artist's paintings of horses for the NGP's collections.[26] Yet Hájek made up for this loss by purchasing a sketchbook and a large-scale painting which Husain created live, in front of the Prague audience which attended his exhibition opening at Jaroslav Fragner Gallery in 1976 (fig. 5).[27] According to the press, this exhibition travelled from Prague to Paris and then on to Boston.[28] Nine years later, in 1985, Husain returned to Prague once more. This time it was a private trip, and he visited Hájek at his home as well as in his office at the château in Zbraslav on the outskirts of Prague. A set of amateur photographs from Husain's trip has been preserved in the documentation of the NGP's Collection of Asian Art.

Figure 5. Opening of M. F. Husain's exhibition, Prague, Jaroslav Fragner Gallery. 22 June 1976. Black-and-white photograph. Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, Fonds: Documentation of the Collection of Asian Art. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

The exhibition *Modern Indian Art*, held in 1979, was in some ways similar to the large exhibition of Indian art that took place in 1955/56. It was also developed as a travelling show, and it took place on the premises of the NGP, which, together with the Ministry of Culture, helped organise it on the Czechoslovak side. On the Indian side, it was prepared by the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, and a hundred of the displayed works were from the National Gallery's collections.[29] The majority consisted of new acquisitions. The presented artists included those whose works the NGP had acquired from the previously mentioned exhibition (1955–1956).

In a typed text included with the documentation from the 1979 exhibition, possibly an opening speech or supporting material for a lecture, Hájek reminisced (here we are making an allowance for a brief excerpt from an unpublished text taken out of context):

> Probably no one ever reproached Rabindranath Tagore of his cosmopolitanism. However, in 1955 this objection was voiced at press conferences in Prague and Bratislava about the painters who followed in his footsteps when the Lalit Kala Akademi first brought a collection of contemporary Indian art to our country. I remember how one of the [exhibition] superintendents, the painter Gade, passionately opposed the demand that an artwork be defined by national cultural tradition. He demanded the right to express himself as a free person in a free world.[30]

Further on in the text, Hájek wrote: 'Several years ago I was sitting in his studio, and [Gade and I] talked about art long into the night'. Hájek recalled how, at that time, he realised that Gade's paintings, which seemed to be so cosmopolitan to critics, are predominantly imbued with the unmistakable fluctuating rhythm of the Indian villages from which the artist came.

The fact that works by Indian artists were purchased in Prague with state support and that personal relationships existed with the artists is to the credit of two particular individuals – Lubor Hájek and Miloslav Krása. From the 1950s to the 1970s, the two managed to regularly show Indian modern art in Czechoslovakia. They were connected through their common beginnings at the magazine *Nový Orient* and then successfully coordinated their common interest in Indian art and culture. Krása remembered his colleague with appreciation and respect in a text that reflected on Hájek's contribution:

> I don't know how it was with artists from other countries, but as far as the Indian painters and sculptors who knew Lubor Hájek are concerned, he made a great impression on them. It was as if only Hoffmeister and Hájek existed in our country for them – and then nothing for a long time. He became the personification of the European avant-garde for them in the discovery of Indian modern art. He brought Ram Kumar, Maqbool Fida Husain, Ajit Chakravarti, and Krishan [*sic*] Khanna to the attention of the Western public in Prague. I had personal experience with him in the collective at the biennials in Delhi and know what I am talking about. And who can forget the opening of Husain's exhibition at Fragner Gallery at which, at the initiative of the artist, Hájek, and Kotalík,[31] the largest Indian painting in the collections of our National Gallery in Prague came to life in front of the eyes of all those present.[32]

While Hájek's and Krása's legacies and the role they played in the framework of cultural politics are well documented, the role that Indian modernist art holds within the Collection of Asian Art at the NGP still needs to be explored.

NOTES

* This article was supported by a NGP's Grant for the Long-Term Conceptual Development of a Research Organisation of the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.

1. Lubor Hájek (5 May 1921, Nové Strašecí–2 March 2000, Prague).
2. For detailed information about Lubor Hájek, see also Markéta Hánová's contribution in this volume.
3. Lubor Hájek, *Indian Miniatures of the Moghul School* (London and Prague: Spring Books, 1960); Lubor Hájek, *Indische Miniaturen der lokalen Schulen* (Prague: Artia, 1961). The monographs were published in several languages between 1960 and 1962.
4. 'Nový Orient před 25 lety. Beseda se zakládajícími členy redakce NO: dr. Luborem Hájkem, CSc., dr. Zdeňkem Hrdličkou a dr. Miloslavem Krásou' [The New Orient 25 Years Ago. A Get-Together with the Founding Members of the NO: Dr Lubor Hájek, Dr Zdeněk Hrdlička, and Dr Miloslav Krása], *Nový Orient* [New Orient], no. 5 (1970): 130–131.
5. Michaela Pejčochová, *Sto let jednoho stromu* [One Hundred Years of a Single Tree]. (Brno: Books & Pipes, 2021), pp. 201–202.
6. Lubor Hájek, 'Výstava indického umění' [Indian Art Exhibition], *Výtvarná práce* [Creative Work], no. 24 (1955): 12. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the publishing department of the NGP.
7. Lubor Hájek, 'K výstavě indického umění' [On the Exhibition of Indian Art], *Nový Orient* [New Orient], no. 8 (1956): 26–27.
8. Exhibition documentation, Collection of Asian Art, National Gallery in Prague.
9. *Indian Art Exhibition*, Visiting Czechoslovakia Hungary Rumania Bulgaria 1955–1956 (n.p.: Lalit Kala Akademi [*sic*], 1955) (exh. cat.).
10. *Indian Art Exhibition*.
11. Protocol no. 3. Meeting of the Purchasing Committee for Oriental Art, 9 June 1956, documentation of the NGP Collection of Asian Art.
12. Badri Narayan, *Mother and Child*, watercolour on paper, 52 × 42 cm, inv. no. Vm 918; D. G. Kulkarni, *Goddess of the Fields*, watercolour on paper, 58 × 78 cm, inv. no. Vm 919; K. Sreenivasulu, *On A Rural Cart*, tempera on paper, 61 × 75 cm, inv. no. Vm 923; S. S. Anandkar, *Glimmers in the Dark*, tempera on paper, 35.5 × 43 cm, inv. no. Vm 924; V. P. Trivedi, *Labourers*, watercolour on paper, 24.5 × 44 cm, inv. no. Vm 925; V. S. Gaitonde, *Evening*, tempera on paper, 50 × 43 cm, inv. no. Vm 926.
13. B. C. Sanyal, *Villager*, oil on canvas, 75 × 60 cm, inv. no. Vm 917; H. A. Gade, *Dinner in the Fields*, oil on canvas, 55.5 × 76 cm, inv. no. Vm 920; Jamini Roy, *Bengali Woman*, tempera on paper, 73 × 34 cm, inv. no. Vm 921; K. K. Hebbar, *Villager*, oil on canvas, 65 × 72 cm, inv. no. Vm 922.
14. For more about Husain's Prague connection, see Simone Wille's contribution in this volume.
15. Lubor Hájek, *Ajit Chakravarti* (Prague: n.p., 1961), n.p. (exh. cat.).
16. Inv. nos. Vm 1813, Vm 1814, Vm 1815, Vm 1816, Vp 892, and Vp 893.
17. Ajit Chakravarti, Sculptural portrait of Lubor Hájek, 1960, plaster, h. 30 cm, inv. no. Vp 4142.
18. František Dvořák, *Bishamber Khanna* (Prague: SČVU, 1960), n.p. (exh. cat.).
19. Inv. nos. Vm 1510, Vm 1511, Vm 1512, and Vm 1513.
20. S. A. Krishnan. 'The Light that Shines'. In *Biren De, a journey … as seen by 5 contemporaries*. n.p.: n.p., [197-?].
21. Biren De, *PRAGUE – May – June 1975*, oil on canvas, 70.5 × 70.5 cm, inv. no. Vm 3678; Biren De, *PRAGUE – June – August 1975*, oil on canvas, 125 × 82.5 cm, inv. no. Vm 3679; Biren De, *Prague – May 1975*, oil on canvas, 70.2 × 50.1 cm, inv. no. Vm 3680.
22. Inv. nos. Vm 2458 – Vm 2495.
23. Simone Wille, 'Chittaprosad´s Linocut Prints at the National Gallery in Prague: Understanding Indo-Czech Cultural Relations in the Postwar Era', *Bulletin of the National Gallery in Prague* XXX (2020): 6–21.
24. Simone Wille, 'A Transnational Socialist Solidarity: Chittaprosad´s Prague Connection', *Stedelijk Studies* 9 (2019).
25. Amit Mukhopadhyay, 'Chittaprasad: Humanist and Patriot', *Art Heritage: Season – 1985–86*, no. 5 (1985–1986): 74–83.
26. Lubor Hájek's handwritten comments, documentation of the NGP Collection of Asian Art.
27. For details about this exhibition, see Simone Wille's article in this volume.
28. Mladá Fronta, 23 June 1976.
29. Lakshmi P. Sihari, ed., *Moderní indické umění* [Modern Indian Art] (Prague: National Gallery, 1979), (exh. cat.).
30. Typed text, documentation for the exhibition *Modern Indian Art*, 1979, NGP Collection of Asian Art.
31. Jiří Kotalík (1920–1996), art historian, director of the NGP from 1967 to 1990.
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M. F. HUSAIN'S WORK IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY IN PRAGUE: CONNECTING EAST AND WEST*

Simone Wille

The Indian artist Maqbool Fida Husain (1915–2011) is considered to be India's most important postcolonial modernist artist. He is intrinsically linked with India's Nehruvian nation-building project and is said to have given form to early postcolonial modernist art in the country. In terms of art history, Husain has been widely researched. There is hardly an account of Indian modernism without due acknowledgement of his contribution.[1] In all of these narratives, it is undisputed that Husain gave form to artistic modernism in post-partition India. From early on in his career, he had the opportunity to travel extensively and internationally, and these journeys can be seen as directly related to the global post-war environment. Along with a general shift in power, decolonisation made new cultural and political connections and alliances possible in every direction. As a nationally and internationally celebrated artist, Husain received invitations to exhibit in many countries.

TRAVEL ABROAD AND FIRST CONTACTS WITH PRAGUE

Husain's first journey outside India took him to Beijing, where he travelled with Indian delegates to the 1952 Asia-Pacific Peace Conference. In 1953 he undertook trips to Egypt and Europe and, thereafter, to many more places. In 1956 he was invited by the Czechoslovak Cultural Ministry to exhibit his works at Prague's Mánes Exhibition Hall, and in the following years, he maintained close ties with Prague and some Praguers, and he returned regularly for different exhibition formats. In 1957 he was commissioned to paint a mural for Air India's Prague office which, however, no longer exists.[2]

In 1976 he travelled across Czechoslovakia and documented this journey in the form of an artist's book or diary, with twenty-three original drawings. These drawings form part of the collection of the National Gallery in Prague (NGP).

The narrative of some of these drawings, together with the memory of a live drawing performance by Husain at Prague's Fragner Gallery in 1976, were eventually repurposed in his second feature film, *Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities*, produced in 2004, where Prague is featured as one of the three cities. The works in the Prague collection and the circumstances of their making are not well known. This article will therefore introduce Husain's Prague works and examine their place in the nationally and internationally celebrated artist's oeuvre, as well as within the collection of the NGP. Husain's multifaceted practice, which included painting, sculpture, toy-making, performance, and film, has been said to have bridged 'boundaries of cultural practices associated with East and West'.[3] Following art historian Sonal Khullar's assessment of Husain's 'cosmopolitan orientations and world historical ambitions of the artist's work',[4] I will also examine to what extent Husain's frequent returns to Prague contributed to the artist's understanding of East and West. Given Husain's personal contacts and institutional connections with Prague – and the political environment of the Cold War, which enabled and facilitated these connections – the question arises as to how we can understand them as constitutive of the artist's creative navigations between the political and cultural environment, both nationally and internationally.

EARLY INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

When Husain travelled as an Indian delegate to the 1952 Asia-Pacific Peace Conference in Beijing, he was already a celebrated artist in India. He was part of the famous but short-lived Progressive Artists Group, a six-member avant-garde group formed in Bombay in the wake of India's independence in 1947.[5] These artists rejected the academicism practised at the J.J. School of Art,[6] which was also favoured by the Bombay Art Society. They developed a formal artistic language which employed not only Indian traditional art but also Expressionism and Cubism. After visiting the exhibition *Masterpieces of Indian Art* at the Government House in Delhi in 1948 – a major exhibition surveying five thousand years of Indian art and culture that travelled from London to New Delhi, accompanying the transfer of power, as it were, from the empire to the nation state – Husain turned to local motifs and art, studying popular and folk art and early Indian sculpture, which he often reduced to their linear and structural minimum.[7] Through his international travels, however, Husain was exposed to a wide range of post-war artistic developments, and not all these impressions have been thoroughly studied.[8] Art historian Susan Bean has referred to Husain's meeting with the artists Qi Baishi (1864–1957) and Xu Beihong (1895–1953) during his trip to China in 1952. According to Bean, Husain was impressed by the calligraphic quality of these artists' brushstrokes, which she sees as impacting on his works to come. She draws connections between the Chinese artists' famous horse drawings and those of Husain.[9] At the peace conference in Beijing, it is likely that Husain saw a repro-

duction of Diego Rivera's famous *Nightmare of War, Dream of Peace* (Pesadilla De Guerra, Sueño De Paz) from 1952, which was displayed on the wall of the meeting hall opposite Picasso's *Dove of Peace* from 1949.[10] Even if he was 'boldly dismissive of those who followed the socialist realism of the Soviet Union',[11] he may well have enjoyed the simple graphic line drawing of Picasso's work. The point here is not so much to judge these works as having an influence on the artist, but rather to draw a larger picture of what he was exposed to, as a result of which one can assess how he positioned himself in relation to these experiences.

As an artist who enjoyed immense international exposure, Husain was well aware of the cultural diplomacy that facilitated these journeys. Therefore, many of the invitations he received had less to do with a genuine interest in modern Indian art, but were rather intended to accompany political and diplomatic networking efforts. This becomes clear from Husain's Rockefeller Fellowship in 1959. He left the United States after six days with a sense of disappointment, finding that his work as an artist within the programme, which was designed to promote friendship between India and the United States in the climate of the Cold War, was met with little interest.[12] In addition to Husain's exhibitions and stays in Prague, this article is therefore also concerned with examining the nature of the artist's relationship with this city, where a close circle of friends – a mix of private individuals, Indologists, and art enthusiasts – followed and nurtured his international career and participated in it in a non-hierarchical way. In contrast to his experience with the Rockefeller Fellowship, in Prague, it seems, he was celebrated as a modernist artist, both from India and internationally, on the basis that his art demonstrated a commitment to his nation but was, at the same time, transnational and transregional in character.

HUSAIN'S CONNECTION WITH PRAGUE

Husain's first trip to Prague in 1956 was connected to an invitation by the Czechoslovak Ministry of Education and Culture to hold a solo exhibition at Prague's Mánes Exhibition Hall, the requirement being that the invited artist was to carry out a so-called study tour of the country. The resulting studies, mainly of drawings and sketches of Prague and its surroundings, were then exhibited together with a series of paintings that he had brought with him for the occasion. Archival images from his first exhibition in Prague show a young and shy Husain in a suit and tie, trying to fit in. In pictures from later stays, he is seen as much more confident, dressed in Indian clothes and wearing a beard, often barefoot, which became his trademark. His engagement with the culturally rich city of Prague was stimulated, not least, by some of his personal contacts. The Czech Indologists and cultural networkers Miloslav Krása and Lubor Hájek were both instrumental in nurturing the city's as well as the personal connection with Husain. But perhaps more important was Husain's attraction to Marie Žurková, a young interpreter

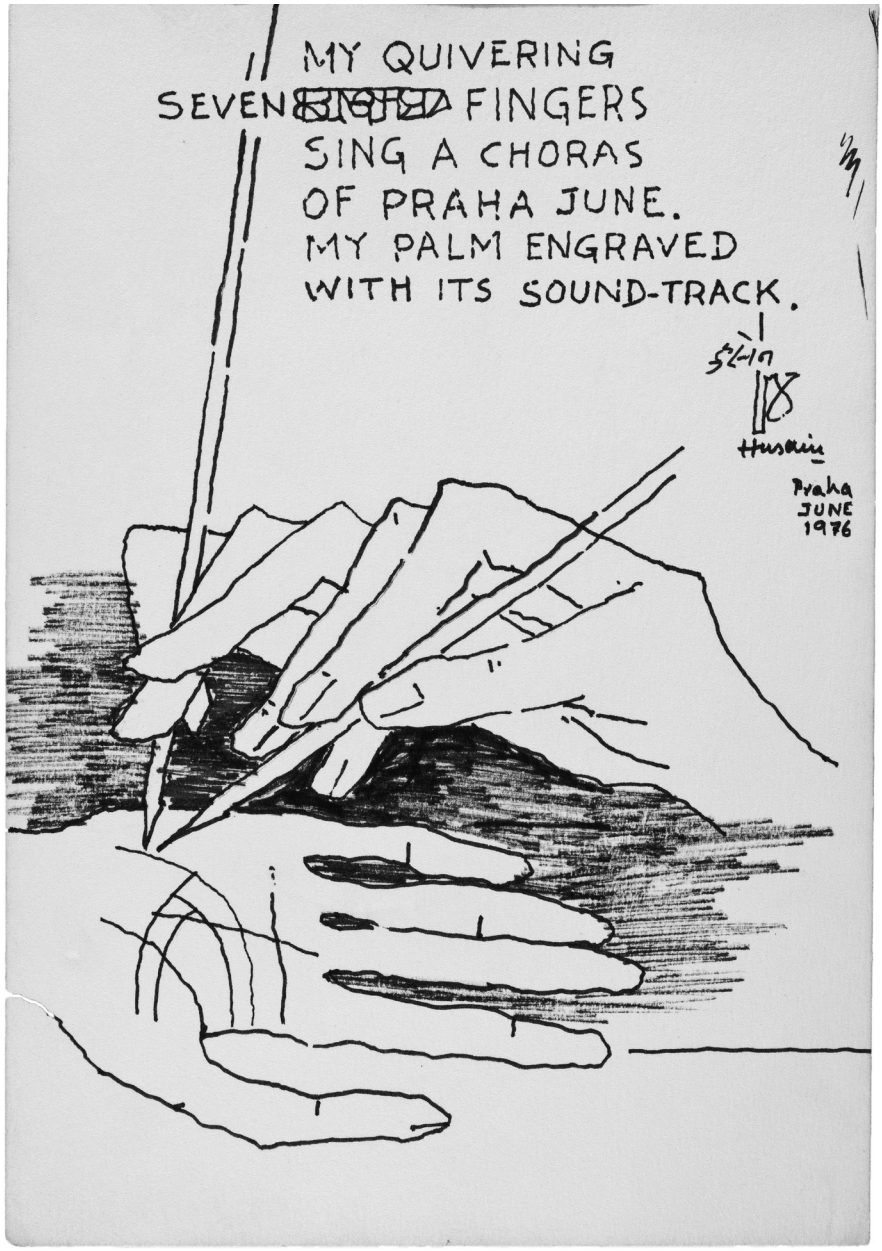

Figure 1. Cover of *Praha* by M. F. Husain. June 1976. Ink-on-paper drawing, 23 × 15.5 cm. National Gallery in Prague. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

from Prague, with whom he fell madly in love. The Indian painter met Marie at the opening of his 1956 exhibition, gave her a collection of his paintings as a gift, returned to Prague regularly over the following years, and even proposed marriage to her.[13] According to author Khalid Mohamed, Marie was the 'impossible' love of Husain's life, and the two are said to have shared an enthusiasm for Eastern and Western writers and philosophers as well as for music.[14] Both Marie and references to her appear in drawings and writings from that period.[15] However, Marie declined Husain's marriage proposal on the grounds that it would be culturally difficult for her to live in India as his second wife. She eventually married another man and moved to Australia.

Husain continued to return to Prague and, while he reminisced about Marie, he nurtured his friendships with Krása and Hájek. Both of them were instrumental in facilitating his Prague trips and were active in maintaining good, personal connections with the Indian artist over the years. Both men are thus visually acknowledged in the series of twenty-three drawings he made in 1976. Krása even appears as a character in *Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities*, and Hájek in fact, played a leading role in purchasing Husain's work for the Collection of Asian Art at the NGP, even lamenting that he should have made more effort to purchase further works by the artist for the collection.[16]

The twenty-three drawings that the artist created in 1976 were – not unlike the 1956 drawings – produced on a study tour through Czechoslovakia. They document places and people which Husain visited. In terms of style and content, however, they are much more attentive to detail, which can perhaps be attributed to Husain's familiarity with and extensive knowledge of the country, its capital city, and its culture and people. These ink drawings were executed on paper and still remain in a Grumbacher sketchbook.

The small format of twenty-three by fifteen and a half centimetres gives the drawings an intimate character. Some of them are vertically oriented, others horizontally. From the title page (fig. 1) onwards, followed by pages *Praha 1* to *18* and *Bratislava 1* to *4*, the series is marked by movement and theatricality, and it is presented almost as a storyboard for a film. On the cover page, we see a finely drawn hand with seven fingers holding two pencils, drawing lines on the palm of another hand. This handwritten portrayal references the artist's perception of Prague as a musical city, and this impression runs through the whole series, both iconographically and stylistically. The triangular lines of the drawing hand (fig. 1) recur, for example, at some point framing the orchestra in *Praha 17* as arches or forming a superstructure over the church in *Praha 18*. The artist has captured a number of recognisable sites, such as the National Theatre in *Praha 1* (fig. 2), the Charles Bridge in *Praha 3* (fig. 3), the Capuchin monastery in the centre of *Praha 5* (fig. 4), and the old town quarter Nový Svět adjoining it.[17]

Figure 2. *Praha 1* by M. F. Husain. 1976. Ink-on-paper drawing, 23 × 15.5 cm. National Gallery in Prague. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

Figure 3. *Praha 3* by M. F. Husain. 1976. Ink-on-paper drawing, 23 × 15.5 cm. National Gallery in Prague. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

The scenes and motifs in these works have been 'collaged' and composed so that we see, for instance, at the far end of Charles Bridge (fig. 3), an allegory of the Vltava River, a popular sculpture in Prague, which is located at Mariánské place at about ten minutes' walking distance from the bridge. Personal and emotional associations can be made with the wedding ceremony in *Praha 5* (fig. 4), allowing us to draw a connection to Husain's marriage proposal to Marie. His biographer, Khalid Mohamed, noted that, after having proposed to Marie, the artist bought a wedding dress in London and a Volkswagen car in Germany, both of which he then delivered to the doorstep of the convent in Prague, where Marie was living.[18] The artist depicts these details and this period of his life in *Praha 5* (fig. 4), where we see a church complex framed by a wall. A larger-than-life female figure leans over the wall and looks down at a car parked in the passage partly inside and partly outside the wall. Opposite this scene sits a sorrowful male figure at the bottom of the church steps as a happy bride and groom emerge from the church. This scenario is complemented by a winged figure, some clouds and a crescent moon that has slipped to the lower edge of the picture, proverbially referring to this episode in the artist's life as a disappointment. But Husain moves on and documents his close friend Krása and his family in *Praha 8*, and the fact that he dedicates one drawing to the Czech painter Jaroslav Hněvkovský in *Praha 6*, by reproducing a detail of this artist's oil painting of Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan, signals that he was well informed about this Czech artist, who had lived and worked in

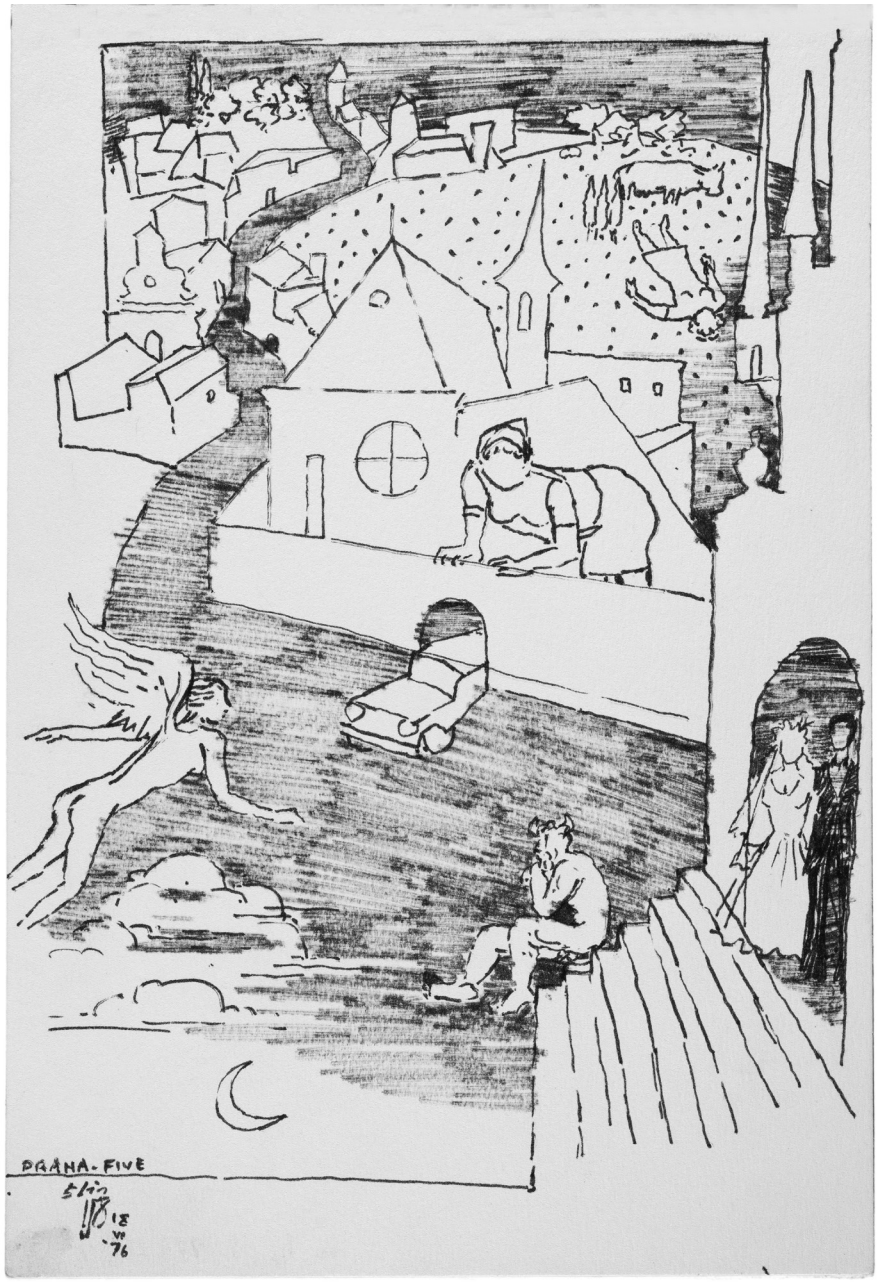

Figure 4. *Praha 5* by M. F. Husain. 1976. Ink-on-paper drawing, 23 × 15.5 cm. National Gallery in Prague. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

India for several years. In *Praha 6*, with Žebrák written in the upper left of the painting, Husain even refers to the fact that he visited Hněvkovský's home town on his tour.

The way Husain treats historical templates and local impressions in these drawings is consistent with his approach to similar models from the South Asian context.[19] According to anthropologist Karin Zitzewitz, the artist was thereby able to identify 'formal strategies that he considered to be essentially Indian', which, she continues, 'came to be recognized as his own modern, individual style'.[20] The formal process of adaptation that the artist continues to undertake in a process of transformation in the Prague drawings is here seen less as cultural essentialism and more as resistance to it. Take the work *Bratislava 1*. (fig. 5). Here we see patterns that Husain may well have noticed in the rural area in Čičmany in today's Slovakia, famous for its log houses with white ornamentation.

The artist has applied these folkloristic symbols to the couple's clothing, partly true to the original and partly in a modified form. They thus appear like formulas, a strategy he had already used in earlier works. Here, I think, for example, of his iconic work *Between the Spider and the Lamp* from 1956, where he placed a random selection of Devanagari alphabets in the upper part of the picture, which were intended to be more symbolic than to actually be deciphered.[21]

When we revisit *Praha 3* (fig. 3), we are attracted by the simplified group of sculptures on Charles Bridge, which the artist has freed from their cultural-religious affiliation. Husain thus transforms these templates and, in the process, adapts and deploys them according to his own vision and rules by 'transfiguring them on to paper'.[22] The artist's transformative strategy to arrive at a general understanding of formal cultural properties can perhaps best be described as a manifestation of a transculturality, where relationships between cultures are explored and one is not privileged over the other.[23] In Husain's staging, these sculptures are reminiscent of a theatrical act and draw a connection with the musical theme that he attests to this cycle of drawings in the prelude. A certain degree of theatricality is also evident in the performance of his live drawing, which he enacted for an exhibition at the Fragner Gallery in Prague during the same trip and where the drawings and a set of other works were also exhibited.[24] Alena Vosečková, who attended the opening and reported about it in the journal *Nový Orient*, noticed that Husain's unexpected act of painting directly in front of the Prague audience was only possible in such a casual way because he was so familiar with and at home in the city.[25] Vosečková described in detail how, after the official speeches, Husain took off his shoes, approached the large, empty canvas that had already stirred curiosity among the audience and began to paint, while Hájek, simultaneously and informally, spoke about the artist's life from his personally collected memories.[26] The theme of the work that developed in front of the audience was related to the *Mahabharata* epic, on which Husain had begun to work intensively since the late 1960s. Vosečková then elaborated on what unfolded in front of the audience in Prague. She emphasised that the artist moved in a 'pantomime-like,

Figure 5. *Bratislava 1* by M. F. Husain. 1976. Ink-on-paper drawing, 23 × 15.5 cm. National Gallery in Prague. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.

performative act' in front of the huge white canvas and that, without much effort, an image emerged.[27] Husain actively began to paint in front of audiences in India in 1968, emphasising the process along with the act of doing, or 'situating', the artwork, as suggested by Khullar, 'within the community of viewers'.[28] This art historian thereby argues against claims that view the artist's performative work as his awareness of international developments and his 'talent for showmanship'.[29] A point that needs to be kept in mind here is that Husain's early experience as a billboard painter and toy designer in 1940s Bombay meant that he was accustomed to painting and designing, not in seclusion, but surrounded by others. I agree with Khullar, who views the achievements of Husain's performative strategies in their capacity to translate not only 'between media' but also 'between sites', which includes 'categories of East and West'.[30] Husain's performance at the Fragner Gallery was thus an act to include his Prague viewers and to make them part of his viewership, by incorporating them into an audience that stretched over the seven continents. The 'quivering seven fingers' to which he refers on the title page of the Prague drawings (fig. 1) can therefore be interpreted as a statement about the seven continents or about the 'dialogue between the seven points' that he poetically describes in the prologue to a volume that was published in New York in 1971.[31] In this publication the seven points were listed by the artist as follows: 'Kyoto, Mahabalipuram, Samarkand, Palermo, Provence, Liverpool and Alaska',[32] running symbolically from East to West. This confirms that, through his practice with different media and in different locations, Husain was interested in connecting rather than dividing. Likewise he was perceived by his supporters in Prague as a link to a world that was seen as allied by the official governments of India and Czechoslovakia but also to the world that lay outside that alliance. But above all, and this was underlined by Hájek, who accompanied the artist's painting performance with personal words, Husain developed long-term friendships with Prague inhabitants, who established a firm understanding of and a connection to his work over the years.

The Prague painting measures one and a half by five metres and is titled *The Goddess Kunti in a Car Drawn by Ten Horses*. It was acquired by the NGP, as were the ink drawings that Husain did during his two-week sojourn. According to Vosečková the artist also made a film about Prague during his journey through Czechoslovakia. She stated that he saw it as a 'kaleidoscope of images and drawings',[33] which, although untraceable, can be imagined to complement some of the twenty-three drawings. When, in 2004, Husain produced his second feature film, *Meenaxi: A Tale of Three Cities*, he may well have revisited his 1976 cinematic diary as an inspiration for the Prague part of the film, or perhaps he remembered the twenty-three drawings that he had created while travelling through the country. *Meenaxi* is about a writer who finds his muse and overcomes his writer's block. The muse's name is Meenaxi, and she performs several different roles. In Hyderbad she is the mysterious perfumer; in Jaisalmer, the exotic woman from the desert; in Prague, the orphan Marie Žurková. Both Hyderabad and Jaisalmer

are important cities for Husain in India, to which he returned frequently. Jaisalmer was one of the locations where, in 1967, he shot his first experimental film in black and white, *Through the Eyes of a Painter*. Prague thus joins a series of places that were important to the artist as stages, settings, and production sites.

The Prague episode in *Meenaxi* moves between locations and scenes that had already appeared in Husain's drawings many years before. It opens with an aerial view of the historic city, zooming in on monuments, statues, churches, and the Vltava River. What follows is the main character, Maria,[34] stepping out of the entrance of a convent, pushing her bicycle[35] to a riverside café where she works and then to a theatre rehearsal, which she hastily leaves to hurry to Prague's main train station, Praha hlavní nádraží, in order to receive Kameshwar Mathur, whose name she holds up on a handwritten sheet of paper. After shots of moving and crossing trains, and of people coming and going, Maria leaves the station disappointed, without having met her expected visitor. A chance encounter between the two follows in the local tram, where the narrative reveals that Maria was sent by Dr Krása to pick up his guest from India. In the next scenes Maria leads Kameshwar through historic Prague, and the two grow visibly closer. The Prague part ends after approximately twenty-five minutes, with a theatrical performance by Maria and the theatre company, closely followed by Kameshwar as part of the audience. The stage backdrop clearly bears Husain's signature of oversized rearing horses. In a discussion about the making of the film, Husain's eldest son, Owais, who was responsible for the Prague interlude, recounts that, as a location, Prague was interesting because he sees the city as a corridor between East and West Europe. Not dissimilar from Husain's first feature film, *Gaja Gamini*, from 2000, which is better known, *Meenaxi* was commercially not very successful. As to the plot of *Gaja Gamini*, Patricia Uberoi has said that it is about 'the universal woman who takes many forms in many times and places',[36] and the same could be said about *Meenaxi*. The film's soundtrack, for which award-winning composer Allah Rakha Rahman was responsible, underscores the special features of the three locations with distinctive music. In the Prague section the music accompanies the camera's gaze, which often pans between historic architecture and monuments and their elongated shadows. Apart from the autobiographical element, then, it is music, movement, and a sense of theatricality that makes *Meenaxi*'s Prague scenes especially relatable to the twenty-three Prague drawings from 1976.

In summary, not only the drawings, the large-scale painting, and the film *Meenaxi* but all the works that the artist produced in Prague and with reference to Prague, most of which have only been mentioned here in passing, are a material reminder of a special relationship that the artist nurtured over many decades with this city and its people. In terms of numbers, these form a considerable body of work and therefore deserve attention. His correspondence, personal visits in both directions, and above all, the reviews of his works in local media testify to a connection that goes far beyond the political framework of the Cold War.[37] A detailed reading of his Prague works, as undertaken here on the basis of selected examples,

can establish an understanding of how the artist viewed Prague as a nexus where East and West connected under non-hierarchical conditions. Husain's works on paper, together with works by other Indian modernist artists,[38] are part of the Collection of Asian Art at the NGP. While they were regularly on display during the communist era, they have not been shown or dealt with since the early 1990s. Together with the team at the NGP, I am currently preparing an exhibition of South Asian modernist masters from the Prague collections that will draw on the transregional connections that were forged and cultivated there during the Cold War period and contributed to an understanding of Indian art which may well have been rare at the time outside of India.

NOTES

* The completion of this study was made possible thanks to the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) (P29536-G26).

1. There is a large amount of literature on M. F. Husain's art and life available in both Hindi and English. I am listing a selection of titles that are representative of this literature: Richard Bartholomew and Shiv S. Kapur, *Husain* (New York: Abrams, 1971); Geeta Kapur, *Contemporary Indian Artists* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978); Monica Juneja, 'Reclaiming the Public Sphere: Husain's Portrayal of Saraswati and Draupadi', *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 4 (1997): 155–157; Yashodhara Dalmia, *The Making of Modern Indian Art: The Progressives* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001); Susan S. Bean, 'Husain's Mahabarata', in *Epic India: M. F. Husain's Mahabarata Project*, ed. M. F. Husain, Susan Bean, and Sashi Tharoor (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2006), 27–44; Daniel A. Herwitz, 'Maqbool Fida Husain: The Artist as India's National Hero', *Third Text* 20, no. 1 (2006): 41–55; Sumathi Ramaswamy (ed.), *Barefoot Across the Nation: Maqbool Fida Husain and the Idea of India* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011); Karin Zitzewitz, *The Art of Secularism: The Cultural Politics of Modernist Art in Contemporary India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17–37; Sonal Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations: Artistic Practice, National Identity, and Modernism in India, 1930–1990* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 90–129;
2. In 1955 he was commissioned to produce a mural for Air India's reservation office in Geneva. See https://www.airindiacollector.com/blog/m-f-hussain-and-his-air-india-creations (last visited 2 February 2022). Prague, Hong Kong, and Bangkok followed. The Air India Prague office was located at Na Příkopě 858/20, Prague 1. I would like to thank Zdenka Klimtová for this information.
3. Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, 90.
4. Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, 90.
5. The group included Francis Newton Souza, Syed Haider Raza, Krishnaji Howlaji Ara, Sadanand Krishnaji Bakre, and Hari Ambadas Gade.
6. The J.J. School of Art was established by the British in 1857 and administered by them until 1947.
7. Early in his career, Husain travelled to study the Khajuraho complex, famous for its tenth- and eleventh-century erotic sculptures. See Zitzewitz, *The Art of Secularism*, 24; see also Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press), 237–267.
8. Art historian Atreyee Gupta has recently pointed to Egyptian figurative influences that preoccupied the artist after a trip to Egypt. See Atreyee Gupta, 'After Bandung: Transacting the Nation in a Postcolonial World', in *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945–1965*, ed. Okwui Enwezor, Katy Siegel, and Ulrich Wilmes (London and Munich: Presetel and Haus der Kunst, 2016), 632–637 (exh. cat.).
9. Susan S. Bean, 'East Meets East in Husain's Horses', in *Lightning: From the Private Collection of Marguerite and Kent Charugundla* (New York: Tamarind Gallery, 2007), 11–20.
10. https://www.aaa-a.org/programs/mexican-muralists-in-china-a-presentation-by-zheng-sheng-tian-and-marisol-villela-balderrama (last visited 4 February 2022). For more information on Pablo Picasso, visit https://www.pablopicasso.org/dove-of-peace.jsp (last visited 24 July 2023); https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/picasso-dove-p11366 (last visited 24 July 2023).
11. Bean, 'East Meets East in Husain's Horses', 12.
12. Susan S. Bean, 'Viewed from Across the Globe', in *Barefoot Across the Nation*, ed. Sumathi Ramaswamy, 248.

13. Marie returned the so-called Maria Collection to Husain in the early 2000s, and it is currently with the Stellar International Art Foundation.
14. Khalid Mohamed, *Where Art Though: An Autobiography* (Mumbai: M. F. Husain Foundation, 2002); https://www.thequint.com/entertainment/mf-husain-maria-zourkova-an-incomplete-love-story-tabu-meenaxi-a-tale-of-3-cities#read-more (last visited 2 February 2021); see also Pradeep Chandra, *M.F. Husain: A Pictorial Tribute* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books, 2011), 132.
15. A number of these drawing appear in an auction catalogue from Pundole's: *Husain: Works from the Collection of the Late Badrivishal Pitti* (Mumbai: Pundole's, 2013) (exh. cat.).
16. See Zdenka Klimtová's contribution, 'Lubor Hájek and Indian Modernist Art', in this book.
17. I would like to thank Zdenka Klimtová for her help in naming and locating monuments and places in these drawings.
18. See Mohamed, *Where Art Though.*
19. See Zitzewitz, *The Art of Secularism*, 24. See also note 38 in that publication.
20. Zitzewitz, *The Art of Secularism*, 24.
21. See Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, 94; see also Gupta, 'After Bandung', 635.
22. Ila Pal, *Beyond the Canvas: An Unfinished Portrait of M. F. Husain* (New Delhi: Indus Books, 1994), 84, here quoted in Zitzewitz, *The Art of Secularism*, 24.
23. On processes of transculturality, see Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna, 'Understanding Transculturalism: Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna in Conversation', in *Transcultural Modernisms*, ed. Model House Research Group (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 22–33. On transculturality, see *Engaging Transculturality: Concepts, Key Terms, Case Studies*, ed. Laila Abu-Er-Rub, Christiane Brosius, Sebastian Meurer, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, and Susan Richter (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019).
24. See fig. 4 in Zdenka Klimtova's article in this volume.
25. Alena Vosečková, 'Neobvyklá vernisáž' [An Unusual Exhibition Opening], *Nový Orient*, no. 7 (1976): 217–218. See also Zdenka Klimtová's text 'Lubor Hájek and Indian Modernist Art' in this volume.
26. Vosečková, 'Neobvyklá vernisáž', 217.
27. Vosečková, 'Neobvyklá vernisáž', 218.
28. Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, 97.
29. Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, 97.
30. Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, 97.
31. Epigraph: Maqbul [Maqbool] F. Husain, quoted in Bartholomew and Kapur, *Husain*, in Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, 90.
32. Bartholomew and Kapur, *Husain*, in Khullar, *Worldly Affiliations*, 90.
33. Vosečková, 'Neobvyklá vernisáž', 218.
34. Note that in the film Marie becomes Maria.
35. Note that Maria doesn't ride her bike but pushes it.
36. Patricia Oberoi, 'The Bliss of Madhuri', in *Barefoot Across the Nation*, ed. Sumathi Ramaswamy, 218.
37. In my forthcoming single authored book with the working title *South Asia in Central Europe*, I focus on the role played by a range of media as discursive platforms.
38. See Zdenka Klimtová's contribution to this volume.

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THE ARCHIVE:
A REPOSITORY

COLLECTING EAST ASIAN OBJECTS IN SLOVENIA: A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CREATING THE VAZ DATABASE*

Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik

INTRODUCTION

Establishing the history of individual art objects and other collectibles is never a simple task, but in the region of today's Slovenia, which in the twentieth century not only underwent two world wars but also belonged successively to four different countries[1] before the Republic of Slovenia was established in 1991, sociopolitical circumstances often led to the loss of the records that might establish an object's provenance. Bereft of their context, objects ended up in museum collections, often condemned to a dormant life in storage. The position of East Asian objects is even more problematic, as curators and museum professionals lacked the specific knowledge to handle them, which in turn led to the neglect of not only determining their provenance but also assessing the material and physical characteristics that would define each object's typology and original place of manufacture. Such objects tended to be placed in other collections or considered lost, while long-term storage in museum repositories without proper documentation and treatment often led to damage.

It was not until work began on the three-year national research project (2018–2021) entitled *East Asian Collections in Slovenia: Inclusion of Slovenia in the Global Exchanges of Objects and Ideas with East Asia*, supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency and overseen by the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Ljubljana, that East Asian objects and collections in various museums were comprehensively studied for the first time. In cooperation with museum professionals and systematically following an interdisciplinary approach, the project team investigated five major East Asian collections for the first time. The aesthetic and formal characteristics of individual objects, as well as the ways they could be interpreted and their connection with the people that produced them, were addressed. In addition, a database of East Asian collections

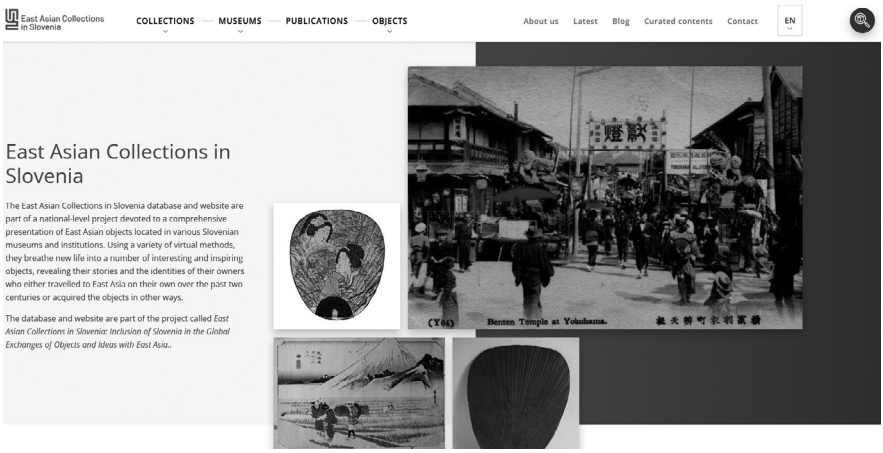

Figure 1. Screenshot of the VAZ database entry page. https://vazcollections.si/. (See plate 28, p. 265)

in Slovenia was created (hereafter the VAZ database),[2] based on specific characteristics of the collection material in Slovenian territory (fig. 1). Thus, a semantic background was created that typologically classified the objects from East Asia and further defined the metadata specifications. In this way, we established classification typologies and created a methodologically based database that allows for user-friendly use and systematic analytical and synthetic review of the material in Slovenian museums.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND STRUCTURE OF THE VAZ DATABASE

Within the framework of the East Asian Collections project in Slovenia, we have so far identified twenty-one collections scattered in various museums across Slovenia.[3] The list includes objects of East Asian origin, including photographs and prints that reached Slovenia between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries (before the 1980s). Moreover, it also includes the correspondence of the Carniolan Jesuit Ferdinand Augustin Hallerstein (1703–1774), who was head of the Astronomy Board at the Chinese Qianlong Court in the eighteenth century, and whose letters are preserved in Slovenian public institutions. It should be noted that the term 'collection' is used in a broad sense here. We are talking about individual legacies that have been handed over to public institutions rather than the documented collections of a museum. Some collections are rich and diverse, while others comprise only a single photo album or postcard album or a few individual objects left to museums by the owners or their heirs.

Most objects of East Asian origin were thus left as bequests by various individuals (sailors, missionaries, travellers, and others) who visited China or Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such journeys were made pos-

sible as a result of Austria-Hungary's newly established diplomatic relations with East Asia in 1869, coupled with the opening of the Suez Canal in the same year, which gave a growing number of Austro-Hungarian merchant and military ships access to the seas. A few of the collections were also created after WWII, when the newly founded Yugoslavia established diplomatic relations with East Asian countries and sent the first diplomats and political representatives to these territories. The objects these various travellers brought back, including photographs, postcards, and archival documents, thus define East Asian material culture in Slovenia and show the many mutual interactions and rich exchanges that took place mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

After preparing a detailed review of individual collections and objects of East Asian origin, our next step was to determine the physical properties of objects (dimensions, material, shape, colour, manufacturing technique, motifs, special features, damage), their origin, date, purpose, and use, and to identify any inscriptions in Chinese, Japanese, or Korean characters. This allowed us to document each object with concrete information about its production, original location, purpose and use. We were then in a position to determine which types of objects were specific to the Slovene space, whether individual types of objects could be associated with different social strata and what similarities or differences could be identified with collecting practices in other European regions.

Some of the main objectives of this research included to highlight the mobility of cultural objects and depict different phases of their lives and to show the importance of collections in the peripheries of the former imperial and colonial centres. Contemporary research on the history of collecting East Asian material has focused mostly on larger collections and thus on collectors and connoisseurs from Western Europe and North America.[4] The early focus on how imperialist and colonialist ideology influenced the way such objects were classified and perceived[5] has more recently given way to an exploration of the connections between an object's materiality and its cultural significance.[6] The seminal idea that objects have a 'cultural biography' was first introduced by Igor Kopytoff and Arjun Appadurai in 1986 and has inspired several interdisciplinary studies drawing on art history, history, archaeology, anthropology, and even economics and other social sciences. This approach emphasises the mobility of a cultural object, which cannot be fully understood by considering only one phase of its life cycle. Rather, its identity is constructed in the course of exchanges between producers, users, collectors, conservators, exhibitors, and museum visitors. Human agency should always be considered in this context, because objects that do not interact with people remain 'immobile'.[7] Therefore, many scholars have studied the recontextualisation of objects as they move from one place to another, tracking the way their meaning changes again and again.

Such an approach is less established in the field of East Asian studies, although the tradition of the fictive biography of things was already a literary genre in Tang dynasty China (618–907).[8] Despite this long tradition of fictive biographies, it was

not until the twenty-first century that scholars began to apply the biographical approach to East Asian objects. One of the earliest studies was conducted by Louise Tythacott, whose research focused on the lives of five Buddhist statues – from their casting in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and their transition to England for the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London to their rediscovery in the Liverpool Museum depot in 2005.[9] A similar approach has been taken in only a handful of other studies of objects made in Asia, which generally focus on the transcultural context.[10]

Following recent research developments, we have therefore attempted to take a broader view and provide answers to the many questions that arise related to East Asian material culture in Slovenia. In doing so, we have focused on four main themes: routes and trade connections; status of people that travelled to East Asia; types of East Asian objects and the canon of collectibles; and exchange of ideas and perception of such objects. In particular, we seek answers to the following questions: By what routes did objects from East Asia reach the territory of present-day Slovenia? What trade relations enabled the sale or resale of these objects? Who were the people from the Slovene ethnic territory who travelled to East Asia on the threshold of the twentieth century? How did they collect objects? What types of East Asian objects are specific to the Slovenian area? How did they function as collectibles? Did the objects serve as curios, souvenirs, or prestige or aesthetic objects? What similarities or differences can be observed in the representative canon of collectibles when we compare it to those operating in former major centres of colonial power? How did people live with these objects in their private environment? How did they use and display them? How do these objects testify to the material conditions, collecting patterns, and values of their collectors? What do they tell us about the processes of material and ideational flows between the Slovenian and East Asian spaces? To what extent did East Asian objects help shape the mental worlds of sailors, the local nobility, and the bourgeoisie?

The questions outlined above are based on insights from the history of material culture and collecting, which conceives of objects as social and cultural products and emphasises their circulation and recontextualisation. With the help of archival and fieldwork, we tried to reconstruct the provenance of individual objects and thereby identify the main owners of East Asian objects in Slovenia. Through microhistory and by adopting a bottom-up approach, we further attempted to reconstruct the family stories of individuals who came into direct or indirect contact with East Asian cultures and societies. In addition, by researching the biographies of individual objects, we addressed the question of how they were transferred from private ownership to the public sphere. The descendants of sailors constitute a special case here: they often approach museum institutions for additional information about individual objects from East Asia which they still have at home and which they are considering selling or donating.

All these questions also raise the issue of what constitutes East Asian heritage in Slovenia. We have built the semantic background of the definition of East Asian cultural heritage in Slovenia on the conceptual scheme that we developed

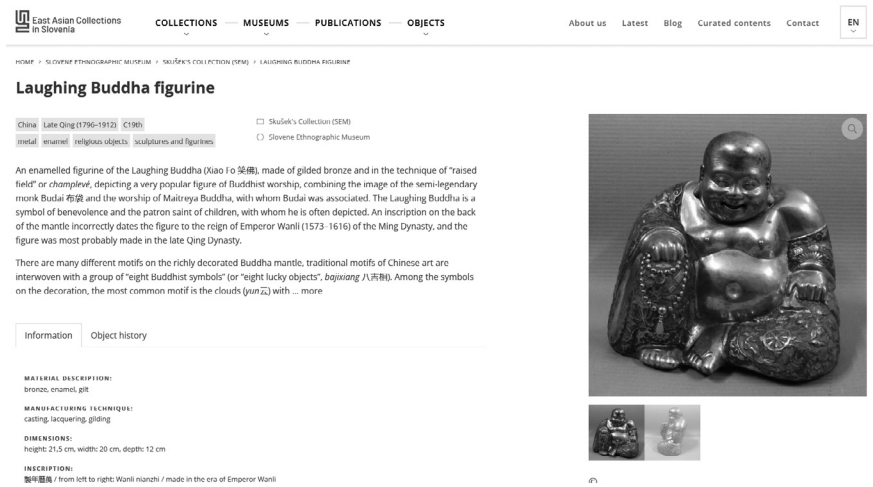

Figure 2. Screenshot of the VAZ database, with a description of individual objects. https://vazcollections.si/predmeti/kipec-smejocega-se-buda/. (See plate 29, p. 265)

within the international project Pagode – Europeana China.[11] The starting position was to consider Europe and China or East Asia as a space of multiple and diverse interactions that began as early as the seventh and sixth centuries BCE with gold mining by the Scythians in the Tianshan Mountains.[12] The well-established anthropological notion of flows is used as a central conceptual approach to highlight the connections between the two regions. The Europe–China space is addressed in terms of three main types of flows: (1) of objects, (2) of ideas and practices (i.e. knowledge), and (3) of people 'in motion'. The appearance of many East Asian objects in European museums, galleries, archives, libraries, or other institutions indicates that the objects circulated in various ways and arrived at their present locations by different routes – brought by missionaries, sailors, merchants, diplomatic and military personnel, or adventurers who had travelled to China and other parts of East Asia. Both objects and people promoted ideational exchange between Europe and China, as evidenced by the various ideas and practices exchanged between the two regions (e.g. art, architecture, and landscape design, philosophy, literature, food, fashion, medicine, religious practices, and perceptions of China). The conceptual scheme distinguishes three types of objects representing Chinese cultural heritage: Chinese objects, China-related objects, and documents relating to the networks that enable the flow of objects. Into this last group fall any visual or written materials, such as maps, letters, receipts, inventory books, ledgers, and diaries that document the various routes and networks built up over centuries. On the basis of this definition, the East Asian objects in Slovenia also include various types of documents that shed light on the creation of networks linking the two regions, such as the letters of the Jesuit Hallerstein, the diaries of sailors, or lists of purchased items.

Such ideas and concepts are also embedded in the architectural structure of the VAZ database, which was developed in parallel with the identification and categorisation processes. The data are organised in terms of three main categories: objects, collections assembled by individual people or collectors, and the institutions that hold these (fig. 1). These categories allow for a comprehensive and systematic search for different types of objects in all collections housed in different museums or for individual collections or collectors, thus giving particular emphasis to the circulation of objects and movement of people from one place to another. More detailed information (region, period or dynasty, century, material, type) is also recorded about each object, in a searchable manner (fig. 2). In this way, the database user can better understand what types of objects from different regions of East Asia are typical collectibles of Slovenian travellers in a particular period or what material is typically used in different types of objects or in different regions, etc. This allows a researcher not only to look up specific information about objects and the various data associated with them but also to search the individual collections and museums that house these objects or find out about the status of the relevant collectors or owners, their collecting practices, and how their collections were assembled. The structure of the database thus enables both data analysis and data display through various web visualisations.

TYPES OF OBJECTS SPECIFIC TO SLOVENIA

The collections of East Asian objects differ in a variety of ways, especially in the type and number of objects and in the goals of the collector who assembled them. There are many sociopolitical and cultural factors at play here, ranging from the sphere of purchasing power, the context of exchange, and accessibility to aesthetic ideals and ideological views. In this regard, we must constantly be aware of the relevant role of people and their actions, remembering that we are dealing with a relationship between a person and an object. The way a person artistically re-evaluates an object from another culture reveals much more about the person and their interpretation of the object than it does about the object itself. Any such interpretation is actively and inextricably linked to the creation or co-creation of society and culture, groups, and individuals with their identities, habits, and customs. Once we understand this relationship between people or societies and objects, we can say that we also come to know ourselves anew. From this point of view, an insight into East Asian collections in Slovenia and their specific language in relation to the social factors, cultural determinants, and aesthetic views of the individuals or larger groups who brought objects to Slovenia is crucial.

To understand what types of objects are specific to the Slovenian territory, it was important to have a comprehensive overview of all the objects in different collections. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges we encountered during the research was creating a typology. Many collections contain small, trivial

objects for everyday use, such as wall calendars, streetcar tickets, paper bookmarks, small tableware, or miniature models or toys, which on the surface have little monetary value.[13] How should we define them, and what category should they be assigned to? The designation 'everyday objects', with which we started, soon proved inappropriate, as it was difficult, if not impossible, to draw the line between everyday objects and other types of objects. A beautifully embroidered silk robe, a porcelain bowl of peaches, or an elegantly carved chair can also be defined as a utilitarian object. As such, most objects can be classified as commodities. We have therefore based our typology on the function or use of the objects. It was important to understand in which environments and for what purposes the objects were used in their primary environment. In this way, and following the previously mentioned conceptual scheme for defining Chinese and China-related cultural heritage in Europe, we have created seventeen object type headings: architecture and models; musical instruments and theatrical properties; games and toys; sculptures and figurines; books and printed materials; numismatics; garments, footwear, and accessories; weapons and military equipment; fans; furniture and interior decor; vessels, dishes, and utensils; personal care objects; utensils for smoking and substance use; postcards and photographs; religious objects; paintings and graphic art; and other objects.

This typology, which encompasses practically all established categories of East Asian art seen in other European museums, reveals the wide variety of object types. The only significant category missing here is that of the bronze vessels of the Shang (1554–1045 BCE) and Zhou (1045–221 BCE) dynasties, which are abundantly represented in some major European and North American museums. Another distinguishing feature of the Slovenian collections is the period of production of the objects they hold, which date mostly from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The reason for this lies in the economic status of the collectors, their purchasing power, and the way objects were acquired, which was often more random in terms of cognitive views and aesthetic evaluation than the acquisition procedure of many systematic collections in other Western metropolises. An exception is the collection of the high-ranking naval officer Ivan Skušek (1877–1947), who, as a result of political circumstances, stayed in Beijing for six years, from 1914 to 1920. During this time, he developed a special aesthetic sensitivity to Chinese heritage, collecting Chinese objects with the intention of establishing a Chinese museum upon his return home.

The current study of East Asian objects kept in various Slovenian museums and other institutions has shown that the collections were built up mainly through direct contact between people from Slovenia and East Asia. The majority of those who travelled to East Asia at the turn of the twentieth century were sailors in the Austro-Hungarian military or on merchant ships. Once they arrived in East Asia, their stay was mainly confined to coastal areas and ports. The higher-ranking officers, however, had more opportunities for contact with local authorities or other wealthier locals, which also gave them a better insight into the interior of

their homes. Sailors of lower rank usually bought and sent postcards or small, inexpensive items more suitable for transport by ship, which they gave to loved ones, distant relatives, and friends. They were especially fond of silk embroidery with motifs of Austro-Hungarian ships, but they also bought teacups, small vases and other porcelain objects, decorative trays, clothing, fans, small statuettes, coins, and walking sticks. Many of these items were 'export art', the most affordable medium for Slovenian sailors. Research has shown that many objects of Japanese origin were obviously produced for export, while some of the objects from China were made for local use. Higher-ranking officers with greater purchasing power, on the other hand, not only bought more items but also chose more valuable porcelain pieces and embroidery as well as decorative screens of larger dimensions. Collections were thus shaped by the accessibility of objects in coastal areas, the intention behind the purchase, and the purchasing power, but most importantly, they reflected the range of interests and aesthetic values of the Slovenians who bought them.[14]

The missionaries' collections are particular in character. The objects they contain are generally related to the mission of spreading the Christian faith, so they reflect a deeper interest in indigenous religious rites. The collection that Fr Peter Baptist Turk (1874–1944) compiled in 1912 and 1913 and sent to the Provincial Museum of Carniola (now kept in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum), with its wide range of religious objects (bells, ritual drums, praying mills, ritual weapons vajra, ritual money, etc.), embroidery, and Buddhist and Daoist statuettes, thus documented the religious and other spiritual rituals of the local population, therefore helping the Catholic Church find out to what extent elements of Christianity could be combined with traditional frameworks, mostly in a syncretic way.

SLOVENIAN COLLECTORS OF EAST ASIAN OBJECTS: WHO, HOW, WHAT

An analysis of individual travellers and collectors reveals that at the turn of the twentieth century, most of those who visited East Asia from Slovene ethnical territories were sailors serving on Austro-Hungarian naval and merchant ships. The second significant group comprised Franciscan and Salesian missionaries. The third, and smallest, group were scientists, scholars, and diplomats whose duties were to conduct scientific research or to carry out diplomatic-consular missions for the Austro-Hungarian government. The geographical distance and the financial burden that such trips entailed meant that only a few people from the Slovene ethnic territories travelled to East Asia on their own. One of these individuals was Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950), the famous traveller, writer, and amateur researcher from Celje (fig. 3). The nature of her journey distinguishes her among the Slovenes who visited East Asia at that time. In November 1919 she embarked on an eight-year journey around the world, which took her to at least forty-five different countries. During her travels, she collected a large num-

Figure 3. Alma M. Karlin with her collection. Black-and-white photograph, photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Manuscript collection in the National and University Library in Ljubljana.

ber of different objects, which are now kept in the Celje Regional Museum and included in the VAZ database. Karlin made her living mainly by working as an interpreter and journalist, but she often ran into financial difficulties and was forced to take other jobs to make ends meet. She was therefore able to purchase only small everyday items or souvenirs, in addition to those that she received as gifts. Interestingly, because of these limitations, her collection includes objects that were of no interest to the wealthier collectors of her time and are quite rare today. Karlin's legacy is rich and varied. In addition to a large collection of objects, she also left published and unpublished works of fiction, journalistic writings, and extensive correspondence, all of which attest to her great interest in foreign lands and cultures. These are kept in the National and University Library, Celje Central Library, and Celje Museum of Recent History.[15]

The earliest objects to arrive from East Asia, now found in the Ceramics Collection of the National Museum of Slovenia, came to the museum almost one hundred years before Karlin's first visit to East Asia, soon after the museum's foundation as the Provincial Museum of Carniola in 1821. In the first ten years of its existence, the museum acquired Chinese and Japanese porcelain dishes and some other items, including seven ivory figurines, wooden figures, and a series of twelve colour paintings depicting Chinese warriors, which were mostly donated by prominent and wealthy members of Carniolan society. It is worth noting that these

Figure 4. Rose Chair (Meiguiyi 玫瑰椅). Early Qing dynasty. Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. VAZ database: https://vazcollections.si/predmeti/rozni-stol/. (See plate 30, p. 266)

objects were categorised in the museum as cultural history, while East Asian and other non-European objects sent by the missionaries were generally classified as ethnographic material. This anomaly was at the heart of the problem the museum faced once these objects entered its space: not only how to store and display the new acquisitions but, more importantly, how to categorise them.[16]

If East Asian porcelain pieces were the earliest objects of East Asian origin to enter a Slovenian museum, the largest collection is that of Ivan Skušek, now housed in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. It consists of about five hundred Chinese objects, some of which are reportedly of imperial provenance: from richly embroidered textiles, paintings, albums, Buddhist statues, ceramics, and porcelain to furniture, decorative wall screens, and a model of a gate. We also find items ranging from coins, musical instruments, and everyday objects to photographs, rare books, and old postcards. The most remarkable and valuable part of his collection consists of various pieces of furniture, which testify to Skušek's pioneering discovery of the elegant lines of Chinese craftsmanship (fig. 4).[17]

Ivan Skušek arrived in Beijing in 1914 purely by chance. When the Japanese declared war on Germany and Austria in August 1914, he was the intendant of the Austro-Hungarian cruiser S.M.S. *Kaiserin Elisabeth*. His ship anchored in front of the city of Qingdao in Shandong to try to defend the German concession against Japanese attack. After the Japanese victory, the captured soldiers were taken to Japanese prison camps, while some sailors were taken by the Chinese. Skušek thus landed in Beijing at the end of November 1914 and remained there until 1920. To this day, little is known about his stay in Beijing, but judging from the letters sent to him by the missionary Father Maurus Kluge from the city of Taiyuan in Shanxi Province, which have survived, and from recent research in the Austrian state archives, Skušek took on high management role in the internment camp set up for Austrian prisoners of war after China entered the First World War in 1917. In this way, he found himself at the centre of a hugely dynamic art trade, which was the consequence of the politically turbulent events set in motion by the Opium Wars. During his six years in Beijing, he systematically collected a wide range of objects with a view to establishing a museum upon his return home. The museum building was to be built on a grand scale in the style of traditional Chinese architecture:

Figure 5. 'Hagoromocho in Yokohama'. Colour postcard. Ivan Koršič's Postcard Album, Sergej Mašera Maritime Museum in Piran. VAZ database: https://vazcollections.si/en/predmeti/postcard-hagoromocho-in-yokohama/. (See plate 31, p. 267)

he even had a model of a Chinese house ready. Apparently, he planned to display the objects against the background of authentic interiors of the houses of the Chinese elite. Unfortunately, his financial situation prevented him from realising his ambitions, but by recording his fascinating story, albeit in a virtual manner, the VAZ database has in a way fulfilled his wish to set up a museum.[19]

In addition to the National Museum of Slovenia's Ceramics Collection and the collections of Alma Karlin and Ivan Skušek, the VAZ database currently includes two further interesting collections. The Asian collection housed in the Celje Regional Museum, which comprises a variety of objects, such as furniture, screens, lacquer objects, fans, and Jesuit missionary scrolls, is the legacy of the Nazi and communist policy of confiscating valuable objects from noble families and other rich individuals during and after WWII. The objects came to the museum from the Federal Collection Centre, which was established in 1945 to collect and preserve works of art of cultural and historical value throughout Slovenia after they became state property. When the confiscated property was recorded, sparse and generalised notes were made, which makes it extremely difficult for researchers to track the biographies of these objects. Finally, there is an interesting album with a large number of postcards from East Asia, dating from before the WWI, which is now in the Sergej Mašera Maritime Museum in Piran (fig. 5). They were collected by Ivan Koršič (1870–1941), a high-ranking Austro-Hungarian naval officer.

CONCLUSION

The VAZ database currently includes the majority of objects in the five collections briefly presented above. All five – the Ceramics Collections, the Asian Collection, the Skušek and Karlin Collections and the Koršič collection of postcards – will be documented in their entirety by 2025. The focus has been on the organised forms of collecting and the collecting patterns of privileged individuals from the Slovene ethnic territory who visited East Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To reconstruct cultural and material contacts between East

Asia and Slovenia in a truly comprehensive way, it will also be necessary to consider the 'orphaned objects' of East Asian origin, which are bereft of their contexts as a result of sociopolitical and historical circumstances. This will enable us to further analyse the perception of East Asian cultures in the Slovene cultural space and place its collecting culture within the broader European context. In the next phase of the project, we will include this category of objects along with other collections. We will also expand the existing database by mapping and digitally visualising individual objects. In this way we will continue to develop new scientific research approaches and methods for the study of collections of local origin, define classification typologies, and by 2030, VAZ will be a methodically designed database that will enable the user-friendly use and systematic analytical and synthetic review of the East Asian material in Slovenian museums.

The VAZ website uses curated methods to bring to life a range of interesting and inspiring objects, not only presenting detailed information about each one but also revealing its story and the identity of its various owners. We regularly publish blog posts, create galleries and interactive, dynamic presentations of individual objects, and prepare thematic virtual exhibitions. To this editorial and curated content, we intend to add multimedia presentations, 3D models of individual objects, and short educational and documentary videos, using various forms of interaction with the local and international community. The VAZ website tells the story of a number of lesser-known individual objects and collections – most of which are still hidden – and also sheds light on material conditions and questions of social status in Slovenia and on the aesthetic trends that developed there.

NOTES

* The research for this paper was carried out as part of two projects – *East Asian Collections in Slovenia: Inclusion of Slovenia in the Global Exchanges of Objects and Ideas with East Asia* (2018–2021) (no. J7–9429) and *Orphaned Objects: Examining East Asian Objects outside Organised Collecting Practices in Slovenia* (2021–2024) (no. J6–3133) – as well as the core research funding programme *Asian Languages and Cultures* (no. P6–0243), all funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

1. Between the mid-fourteenth century and 1918, most of the Slovene ethnic territory was under Habsburg rule. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary in 1918, the Slovenes co-founded the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs. After a month, the state became the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, which was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. After the Second World War Slovenia joined the newly formed Yugoslavia as a constituent republic, which existed until 1991.
2. The VAZ database is accessible at the following address: https://vazcollections.si/
3. For the list of all East Asian collections in Slovenia, see Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik, 'Zbirateljska kultura in vzhodnoazijske zbirke v Sloveniji' (Collecting Practices and East Asian Collections in Slovenia), in *Procesi in odnosi v Vzhodni Aziji: zbornik EARL (Processes and Relations in East Asia: An EARL* [*East Asia Resource Library*] *Volume)*, ed. Andrej Bekeš, Jana S. Rošker, and Zlatko Šabič (Ljubljana: Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts 2019), 93–138.
4. E.g. Craig Clunas, 'Oriental Antiquities/Far Eastern Art', in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press 1997), 413–446; Steven Conn, 'Where Is the East? Asian Objects in American Museums, from Nathan Dunn to Charles Freer', *Winterthur Portfolio* 35, no. 2/3 (summer–autumn 2000): 157–173; Stacey Piercon, *Collectors, Collections and Museums. The Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain, 1560–1960* (Oxford: Peter Lang

2007); Louise Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects: Buddhism, Imperialism and Display* (New York: Berghahn Books 2011); Vimalin Rujivacharakul (ed.), *Collecting China: The World, China, and a History of Collecting* (Newark: University of Delaware Press 2011); Jason Steuber and Guolong Lai (eds.), *Collectors, Collections and Collecting the Arts of China: Histories and Challenges* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida 2014); Louise Tythacott (ed.), *Collecting and Displaying China's 'Summer Palace' in the West: The Yuanmingyuan in Britain and France* (New York and London: Routledge 2018).

5. K. Ian Shin, 'The Chinese Art "Arms Race": Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in Chinese Art Collecting and Scholarship between the United States and Europe, 1900–1920', *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 23, no. 3 (2016): 229–256; Conn, 'Where is the East?'; Clunas, 'Oriental Antiquities'.
6. Rujivacharakul, *Collecting China*.
7. Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects*, 8.
8. Alice Bianchi and Lyce Jankowski (eds.), *The Social Life of Chinese Objects* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).
9. Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects*.
10. Dorothy Ko, *The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press 2017); Francis Allard, Yan Sun, and Katheryn M. Linduff (eds.), *Memory and Agency in Ancient China: Shaping the Life History of Objects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2018); Anna Grasskamp and Monica Juneja (eds.), *EurAsian Matters. China, Europe, and the Transcultural Object, 1600–1800* (Cham: Springer 2018); Bianchi and Jankowski (eds.), *The Social Life of Chinese Objects*.
11. Maja Veselič and Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik, *Defining Chinese and China-related Cultural Heritage in Europe – A Conceptual Scheme* https://photoconsortium.net/pagode/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PAGODE-Defining-Chinese-and-China-related-cultural-heritage-in-Europe-VB-MV-2020.12.02.pdf (Ljubljana: 2019). For more on the Pagode – Europeana China project, visit https://photoconsortium.net/pagode/. Last visited 9 July 2023.
12. James Beattie and Lauren Murray, 'Mapping the Social Lives of Objects: Popular and Artistic Responses to the 1937 Exhibition of Chinese Art in New Zealand, East Asian History', in ed. Remco Breuker and Benjamin Penny, special issue, *East Asian History*, no. 37 (2011): 39–58.
13. The role of small and trivial objects in the collection of Alma M. Karlin (1889–1950) has been explored by Chikako Shigemori Bučar, 'Trivial Objects from Taisho Japan in the Collection of Alma M. Karlin', *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 21–45.
14. See also Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik, 'Collecting Chinese Objects in Slovenia at the Turn of the Twentieth Century', *Ming Qing Yanjiu* 24, issue 2 (2020): 161–180.
15. For more on Alma Karlin, see Barbara Trnovec, *The Endless Journey of Alma M. Karlin: Life, Work, Legacy* (Celje and Ljubljana: Celje Regional Museum and Ljubljana University Press, Faculty of Arts 2020); Maja Veselič, 'The Allure of the Mystical: East Asian Religious Traditions in the Eyes of Alma M. Karlin', *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 259–299; Klemen Senica, 'Following in the Footsteps of Isabella Bird? Alma Karlin and Her Representations of Japan', *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 225–257; Shigemori Bučar, 'Trivial Objects'.
16. For more on museum classification of East Asian objects in Slovenia, see Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik, 'Between Ethnology and Cultural History: Where to Place East Asian Objects in Slovenian Museums?', *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 85–116.
17. Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik, 'Skušek's Discovery of Chinese Furniture's Sophisticated Lines: The Collecting of Chinese Furniture and the Issue of its Categorisation', in *Centring the Periphery: New Perspectives on Collecting East Asian Objects*, ed. Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik (Leiden: Brill, 2023).
18. Maurus P. Kluge, *Letters to Skušek*, unpublished material (Ljubljana: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, 1919). See also Mina Grčar, 'Ivan Skušek Jr. and His Collection of Chinese Coins', *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 47–83.
19. For more on Ivan Skušek, see also Helena Motoh, 'Lived-in Museum: The Early 20th Century Skušek Collection', *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 119–140; Tina Berdajs, 'Retracing the Footsteps: Analysis of the Skušek Collection', *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 141–166.

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COLLECTING ASIAN ART: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

OF CENTRES, PERIPHERIES, VALUES, AND JUDGEMENTS

Simone Wille in Conversation with Partha Mitter on 'Decentering Modernism' and Modernist Routes beyond Western Europe

This conversation addresses colonisation in a broader sense, by entering it via Western modernism, which exerted its cultural hegemony around the globe, creating an asymmetrical relationship between the centre and the periphery; the metropolis created the 'originary' avant-garde discourse, and regions outside the centre suffer from the problem of derivativeness and time lag. Within the global colonial order, Asia, Africa, and Latin America were represented as being on the margins. Though less evident, there were margins within the centre, as exemplified by Eastern and Central Europe. This conversation will consider ways of decentring this unbalanced global situation by taking the case study of Indian art.

Simone Wille (SW): Partha, your work has been of tremendous importance to many of us. You were the first art historian to study the limitations of the Western canon and that, of course, resulted in your first book, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. Paperback, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 and Oxford University Press, Delhi 2013). The book that followed was *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India. 1850–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

In your important text 'Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery' (Mitter, Art Bulletin, 2008), your opening sentence reads as follows: 'With the collapse of earlier certainties, the last two decades have witnessed serious soul-searching among art historians about the future of the discipline' (Mitter, Art Bulletin, 531). You then refer to Hans Belting, whose *The End of the History of Art* (Belting, 1987), you say, 'accepted the demise of art history as a grand Hegelian narrative' (Mitter, Art Bulletin, 2008, 531). You are sceptical about his assumption that the diversity of art forms and practices 'make the canon look vulnerable' (Mitter, Art Bulletin, 2008, 531).

You then point to the 2004 publication *Art Since 1900* (2004), which you value for its importance for modernist Western avant-garde art, but refer to its weak-

ness in leaving untouched many of those modernisms that were not developed in the Western centres of modernism, which are Paris, Berlin, Moscow, New York, and to a degree, London.

And you were not the only one reacting with criticism to this volume. In 2008 the Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski was also prompted by the publication *Art Since 1900* to formulate his critique of how the art of Central and Eastern Europe continues to be excluded from the larger narrative. He set this out in an article in *Uměni/Art*: 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History' (Piotr Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History', *Uměni* LVI, 2008: 378–383).

This seems to have coincided with 'a moment of confluence of criticism', with one strand coming from the field of postcolonialism and the other from an art history concerned with reconceptualising the relationship with the region – i.e. Central Eastern Europe – and the global context. Where do you see the potential in these two approaches? Where do they overlap?

Partha Mitter (PM): Thank you, Simone, you have raised some fundamental questions. Let me try to answer them one by one.

I like your expression: 'a moment of confluence of criticism'. But, in the accumulation of knowledge, there is always confluence – a number of scientists thinking of the same problem at once – DNA.

The questioning started as early as 1974 with Terry Smith's essay, 'The Provincialism Problem', where he describes the position of Australian art vis-à-vis New York as 'subservience to an externally imposed hierarchy of values'.[1] But his focus is geographical, and he doesn't theorise it as part of a wider political problem and doesn't see it as a problem of colonialism. This particular school of thought, spatial and geographical, has been quite influential and has pushed back from our work, you know. There was a very important conference in Lisbon, Portugal, dedicated to the memory of the Greek scholar Foteini Vlachou (1975–2017), in 2019. Vlachou had pointed to Portugal and Greece as being on the margins and neglected by mainstream modernism, and she argued for an autonomous and independent development of the periphery. The conference developed these ideas further. Their approach was essentially geographical, centring on Portugal and similar regions remote from the metropolitan New York, London, and Paris. And, of course, my friend Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann wrote a book about spatial geographical marginalities that are remote from the metropolitan centres mentioned.[2]

Piotr Piotrowski made a more powerful intervention by pointing to the exclusion of Central and Eastern Europe from the dominant narrative of modernism. He also identified this marginality as a form of colonial hegemony. Indeed, he expressed his disappointment that I had not included these regions in my essay. I accept his criticism, but my aim was to develop a theory that would explain the global imbalance.

I have great admiration for Pietrowski, whom I met only briefly. Sadly, my debate with him was cut short by his death. He provided a salutary reminder that, while Eastern and Central Europe were generally regarded as part of the

European continent, what remained unsaid for a long time was the fact that following the Second World War, these areas under the Soviet regime were tacitly excluded from the general Western European societies, which divided the post-war world into three categories: First World (the liberal Euro-America); Second World (communist bloc); Third World (former colonised countries). Art was one of the casualties, and this situation has continued beyond the fall of the communist regimes in Europe. He proposes a transnational, horizontal history of the European avant-garde that will allow the local narratives to be fully integrated on a pan-European level. Following Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Pietrowski calls this method 'geo-history', which would enable Eastern and Central Europe to be placed on an equal level. The consequence of Piotrowski's spatial history is to enable the European margins to be fully integrated into the modernism of the centre.

While Piotrowski's intervention is of great value, my worry is that simply bringing the European margins within European modernism will do nothing to counteract the inherent problem of otherness and the hegemonic canon of marginality and exclusion. His critique is correct but not his solution. His view that Polish art, for instance, should be included within the mainstream modernism perpetuates the problem of the centre/periphery imbalance. Rather than aiming to join the exclusive club – and here I don't think I want to belong to the club that doesn't want me – our objective should be to 'decentre' the whole avant-garde canon, affirming the essential hybrid nature of modernism, which I have called 'decolonising' modernism. This is the whole exercise of decentring modernism. So, what is the centre/periphery? And the art historical hierarchy? It is an exclusion, and here I point to my expression 'Picasso manqué syndrome' (Mitter 2008)! Where do we begin with this? You know, centre/periphery goes a long way back in art history – to Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574)!

Vasari's construction of the periphery in Renaissance art, taking Florence, Rome, and Venice as the centre, was later to influence the new discipline of art history and was taken up by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768). Vasari told us the rules: order, balance, harmony. Rationality of classical taste. By that token, Winckelmann regarded his previous period, Baroque, as decadent, and Rococo as frivolous. Perceiving Baroque as decadent had a tremendous impact on colonial art. Whenever pioneering art historians like James Fergusson (1808–1886) look at early Buddhist art as perfect, the rest, whatever comes thereafter, is written in decay. For him, South Indian temple art was thoroughly decadent and of bad taste. Terrible. Vasari's principle affected the whole of art history. First, classical art, and this is what I talked about in *Much Maligned Monsters*. But we now also need to think about modernism. The problem is not taste, because modernism challenges or attacks classical art, but the problem is the whole teleology, the concept of progress. And there, modernism belongs within the original teleological discourse which it couldn't shake off, even with its radical ideology.

Periphery is not simply a matter of geography, but of art history, and especially of race, gender, and lifestyle minorities in Western art. Therefore, in modern-

ism, regions outside the West suffer from an automatic time lag and belatedness. When the great Mexican poet Octavio Paz received the Nobel Prize in 1990, he spoke for everybody outside the centre when he said Mexico didn't belong to modernity because it was marginal:

> In spite of what my senses told me, the time from over there, belonging to the others, was the real one, the time of the real present … For us, as Spanish Americans, the real present was not in our own countries: it was the time lived by others, by the English, the French and the Germans. It was the time of New York, Paris, London … I wanted to belong to my time and to my century. A little later this obsession became a fixed idea.[3]

So, in order for changes to happen, we need new works and perhaps new art histories. I hope that our new book *20th Century Indian Art* (Mitter, Mukherji, Balaram, 2022), which for the first time presents an overarching narrative of a major non-Western tradition, will present another viewpoint and hopefully fill the lacuna.

SW: So, is there a historic chance to connect with? Can this only be achieved with a focus on style? Could there be parameters other than stylistic ones? Could networks, and perhaps horizons (Pietrowski), be a way to decentre hierarchies?

PM: How do we create connections? We are thinking of cross-cultural exchanges here. Style is a complex issue. Because it assumes genealogy. The famous Harold Bloom talked about the anxiety of influence and derivation (Bloom 1973). The notion of style becomes extraneous when talking about non-Western modernist art; what you are doing is imposing Western stylistic categories and then saying, 'Well, you see, by Picasso's standards, this artist is simply not good enough'. This is a form of colonial subjugation that I refer to in the Picasso manqué syndrome, saying, 'if the imitation is too successful, it is tantamount to aping; if, on the other hand, the imitation is imperfect, it represents a failure of learning'.[4] So, you can never be like Picasso. It will always be manqué, not quite. That has so many ramifications. How do you look at these relationships? Style, and here I am thinking of Michael Baxandall, who talks about style as a wrong category to understand art (Baxandall, 1985). If we don't accept style, what else can we use? You mention networks. That is an interesting idea. As I see it, this means much more looking at different movements, transcultural movements probably. I'll give you one example. The Bauhaus and Weimar. How the works of Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Johannes Itten were shown in India in 1922 at the height of modernism (Mitter 2013). Networks have a lot of potential and could bring groups together who converge on certain dominant interests, though they may also have other interests. For instance, the interests of Kandinsky and other Bauhaus artists were historically different from those of Abanindranath and the Bengal School. But as the art historian Stella Kramrisch[5] observed, they were able to form an informal

network that challenged the dominant canon of academic naturalism as part of colonial/capitalist modernity.

SW: The conference Collecting Asian Art in Prague looked at the global exchange of art and artefacts and the creative and cultural interchange and encounters between Asian and Central Eastern European countries, protagonists and locations since the late nineteenth century. It can be said that, until the Second World War, there was a general interest in Asia, its arts and artefacts, its philosophies, etc., across European countries. From this, the collecting of artworks and artefacts developed into a real industry, an activity carried out through certain networks that often competed with one another throughout Europe.[6]

After the Second World War, however, the picture changed. Central and Eastern European countries became independently involved in cultural exchange, and judging from the art collections in Central Europe, there are large accumulations of art, including modern art, from Asian countries. Moreover, especially during the communist era, there were numerous and frequent exhibitions of Asian art, as well as artistic, cultural, and intellectual exchanges. This, of course, requires us to look at these exchanges through the lens of the Cold War. Let's take the example of India: Indian art exhibitions enjoyed popularity in Europe, the United States, Japan, and South America throughout the second part of the twentieth century, and the 1990s seemingly intensified this trend, reaching a peak in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Here, one has to acknowledge India's political inclination during the bipolar phase of the Cold War as a non-aligned country with friendly ties and leanings towards the Eastern bloc. Thus, exhibitions of Indian art in the post-war era were quite frequent and common in Central and Eastern European countries, a fact that is often ignored by accounts surveying Indian exhibition in Europe. How can we give due credit to these exhibitions and collections beyond simply writing them into the narrative of art history? Or beyond simply seeing them as having accompanied political and diplomatic networking efforts?

PM: Thanks for the thoughtful question. As it relates to your conference, I think that Asian art collections in Eastern Europe are an important point. First, my knowledge of the field of collecting in Eastern Europe is so limited that my answers will probably reflect more ignorance than knowledge. But I will try to make some general points. A massive show in Lugano (2017–2018), *The Myth of India in Western Culture 1808–2017*, offered a comprehensive portrait of European fascination with India including collections (Schenini 2017). I also attended a conference on collecting Asian art in America (Global Impact of Asian Aesthetics on American Art and Material Culture, Winterthur, Wilmington, Delaware, October 10–14, 2018), where Professor Michael Leja and I had a productive conversation in which we exchanged our views on global exchanges in artefacts and ideas. Michael focused on material culture and saw these exchanges as part of a commodity exchange across nations as an aspect of capitalist commodification.

While agreeing with him, I stressed the role of cultural exchanges and dialogic exchanges across cultures, even though these exchanges were dependent on power relations. Now, as to the question you ask, my own guess is that representations of Asia in Eastern and Central Europe drew upon what Edward Said calls Orientalism.[7] While these Eastern and Central European regions had a relatively open attitude towards the East, nonetheless they, too, subscribed to Christian values and classical aesthetics. But there is another history, in other words, that of collecting going back to the *Kunstkammer* era. Did collections in Eastern Europe form part of that tradition? There were big collectors in the nineteenth century like Émile Guimet, who plundered Japan and other places to create his museum. So, Central Eastern Europe perhaps did not follow but shared or accepted Western European ideas.

The situation changed during the Cold War. Russians, Poles, and other Eastern Europeans who weren't allowed to visit the West found it much easier to visit India. Also, the Soviets welcomed cultural exchanges with non-aligned India. I think it was in 1952 that I saw, as a teenager, the massive exhibition of Soviet art in Calcutta (today's Kolkata). You know, of course, about the big festivals of peace and culture organised by the Soviets in the developing world. Even though Indian artists gained some recognition in the West, they were made more welcome in Eastern Europe. You know that part of history much better than I do. But in Calcutta, both the KGB and the CIA were courting the Bengali intellectuals. Indian painters, however, did not like Soviet art. They were really much more drawn to Western art and formalist modernism. Many Indian modernist artists, and you know about them and you have written about them, had a place in the West, but not an essential one. In Eastern Europe, these Indian artists were much more welcome. They had shows; they were invited. Do you feel that?

SW: Oh yes, absolutely, Partha! And now, just a couple of days ago, I completed my contribution to this volume on M. F. Husain's very close ties with Prague and its people, and his works in the National Gallery in Prague. Over his long period of engagement, he was appreciated in Prague both as an Eastern and as a transnational artist.

PM: That is an important issue. You are absolutely right. The appreciation that comes from the margin. So, think about Clement Greenberg, who created the binary relationship between the free world and the Soviet world.[8] According to him, American abstract expressionists arose to defend aesthetic standards against what he called kitsch or formulaic art. They were progressive, as opposed to Soviet art, which degraded culture. But of course – and I learned a lot during my collaboration for a recent conference in Warsaw[9] – art in Eastern Central Europe was very rich, and many of us don't know enough about it. This leaves us with two decentrings, and I am very happy to be part of that.

SW: And since you are talking about the Warsaw conference, I remember that Anselm Franke was your respondent, and in a recent publication, he argued about barriers that prevent 'the situating of artistic modernism within the global history of colonial modernity – and [maintained] that this barrier binds the art world and its institutions to the specific ideological configuration of the post-World War II period and its economic modernization paradigms'.[10] He made this argument in connection with the question about how to replace Eurocentrism and how to go about this historic chance of revision. About which barrier, he asked, are we talking here? (Franke, 2021, p. 29) This brings me to another question I wanted to ask – namely, is it realistic to think that the writing of a global or world art history is possible?

PM: Your question relates to a long European, especially Central European tradition, going back to the historical writings of the eighteenth century and to Johann Christoph Gatterer, the pioneer of universal history. In art history, the Germans Franz Kugler, Wilhelm Lübke, and Carl Schnaase were the leaders, who had a clear narrative structure. However, their aesthetic judgements owed to Vasarian or classical norms of taste. In many ways, Gombrich's classic story of art is possibly the last of that great tradition, though he strongly objected to totalising concepts in his famous opening statement: 'there is no such thing as art; there are only artists'.[11] In the late twentieth century, with globalisation, art historians – notably Hans Belting – separate world art from global art, and Belting himself writes on global art (Belting, 2011).

In the late twentieth century, with globalisation, art historians separated world art history – such as that of David Carrier, who tried to formulate a world art history, seeing the problem as one of trying to describe an unfamiliar art from another culture. But he didn't wish to impose a pre-existing schema in describing these different traditions and therefore chose a more modest approach. Hans Belting has been vocal regarding global art history, which, as he observes, seeks a language to describe transcultural interaction and exchange. Sometimes it is defined as the history of contemporary non-Western art (Belting), while it seems to me that world art history is a collection of the histories of different artistic traditions. But I cannot claim to offer any insight on this because these terms are still evolving, and there are no commonly agreed definitions. Writing this has thus become a daunting task. But all I can say is that the underlying assumptions of art history must change, as must the art historical underpinnings which challenge long-held stereotypes. I have written quite a lot about this, as you know, especially reimagining modernism. But if I may cite *20th Century Indian Art*, the way forward is detailed contextualised regional art histories, for example, of Africa or Latin America, but bringing out all the nuances of each nation within Africa or Latin America for instance. Details with a broader perspective should be the aim.

SW: So, are you saying that decolonisation is the key?

PM: Yes, decolonising writing. Taking apart the basic ideas. It's a slow process. It's not all black and white. It's about shades of opinion. It is a long learning process – this is what I feel. With lots of voices, it's a book that can make a difference. Plurality is the ideal and not a monolithic narrative which tends to exclude the marginals both globally and also within a region, minorities such as tribes, LGBTQ+ groups – multivocal.

SW: Partha, while I see your work as having tremendous influence, I feel that most of us, including myself, are not engaging thoroughly enough with your ideas, ideas that you yourself have developed.

PM: I feel that the younger generation is very promising. I include you among them. I am now no longer young, and I hope that the legacy will be of some importance, and lots of young people, all the way to Brazil, are already responding to it. But I honestly believe that I haven't written down anything in stone. I am also aware that my scholarship is often imperfect or flawed. But what is important is to raise questions – to ask questions. And that is one thing I learned from my teacher Ernst Gombrich. He also believed that it is more important to ask questions than to find simple answers. And I am now becoming very aware of the area of Eastern and Central Europe, and we need to develop more awareness of this region. If I still have time, I would love to write a sequence on decentring modernism by taking into account the margins within the centre, which Piotrowski talked about. But, Simone, my point is that no one has special privileges. So, I wouldn't privilege one tradition over the other. It's a hybrid thing. We are all together. I believe in context. How do I judge a painter who is modernist? I try to understand what he is doing if he is serious, and then I try to form a judgement. And I find that that often works. Modernism doesn't have a single rule, like classical art. But this is how you can arrive at a judgement of value centred on individual artists within a tradition or movement. And to exercise value judgement is important. Not all Indian artists were or are equally good.

SW: I reached out to Ebba Koch and asked her if she could reformulate the question that she asked during the Prague conference.[12] Here is what Ebba asked in response to your paper presentation:

> In his concluding observations, Partha was arguing not to make the West our default position. My question goes back to an issue which occupied the Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte in its early days, when the aim was to develop a globally valid scientific methodology for the investigation of art. If the art historical method, as developed in German-speaking Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is a science, should it not be applicable to art globally?[13]

PM: Ebba raises a fundamental question with which I have been struggling throughout my research career. What I am thinking of is a very difficult issue. There are those who wish to ignore art historical methods and deny history. But, by denying this, you reinforce it, and that's the elephant in the room. Also, in life nothing is absolute – yes or no, black or white – there are shades of meaning. I need to explain: Ebba refers to Oleg Grabar's comment, which is interesting and with which I am in complete agreement. In short it isn't wrong to use a method developed in the European context so long as you are aware that the European method is also a product of European intellectual and cultural history with all its baggage. There is no objective truth in the humanities – because values intervene. Of course there are some objective elements: one can document an artist's childhood, career, workshop, their relationship, their contemporaries, and the historic moment during which they worked. One can also describe in detail the subject matter and iconography of each painting. But is that sufficient? Obviously not. Most art historians then offer evaluations of these works and offer value judgements. Here the problem starts. How do you do it? Central European Kunstwissenschaft is an effective instrument for studying the objective aspects of a work of art. But when we come to taste and values, how do we avoid Western biases?

I will try to explain with examples from my own career. I owe my work to E. H. Gombrich, without whom I couldn't have become an art historian. Even though I was involved in art as a painter, my discipline was history, not art history. But he welcomed that and always insisted that he himself was a historian.

His own career is instructive because of his profound questioning of his own method. His book *Art and Illusion* is, in my view, his greatest work (Gombrich, 1960). It questions the whole European idea that art is natural; he calls it culturally constructed, uses linguistic methods to reinforce his argument, and points to its limitations. So, that was a revolutionary idea and most postcolonials loved that initially. But then, being Gombrich, who was always thinking and constantly evolving his own ideas, his flexibility disappointed the radical scholars. When I met Gombrich, as an artist and historian, he asked me if I could tell him why he found the florid Hindu temple sculptures disturbing to his sensibilities? He subsequently invited me to explore this in my doctoral dissertation. In *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, I used his paired categories, schema and correction, to investigate the role of stereotypes in Western misrepresentations of Indian art. I concluded that European misrepresentations, culminating in colonial art history, continued into the twentieth century and have been part of the Western dismissal of Hindu sculptures as irrational and of bad taste. So, much of what I have produced I owe to him, but of course, as you know, my work is very different. He had little experience with colonialism but he was so open-minded about that.

SW: Partha, in your first book, *Much Maligned Monsters*, you claimed that intercultural encounters are subject to misunderstandings. You looked at early Western stereotypes of Indian gods as classical monsters (Partha Mitter, *Much*

Maligned Monsters, 10), and you spoke of cultural preconceptions as opposed to knowledge of the other culture, in this case Hinduism. Would you say that this applies to the whole of the West, or do we have to make distinctions within what is generally termed 'the West'?

I am asking this because you also point out that these misconceptions were in place despite systematic colonial administrative knowledge production about the colonised peoples and countries.

So, what I am trying to get at is: would you say that those European countries that were not directly involved in colonialism – and of course we need to recognise that not exerting direct colonial control did not mean that non-colonial European countries were not beneficiaries of the colonial system – were perhaps less judgemental or less prone to false judgement? In the context of this edited book, the region I am concerned with is Central Eastern Europe.

PM: You have two elements here: within Europe you have many cultural differences, but in relation to the other or non-European cultures, such as Asian, African, or South American, Europe is unified as a block, sort of us versus them. Yes, previously, ignorance saw monsters when there were actually gods. But, with objective knowledge, the whole of ancient Indian art was mapped out, and we are all in the British archaeologists' debt. But as I argue in chapters IV and V,[14] even with the expansion of knowledge, the problem of appreciation remained – two competing rationalities and aesthetics. Classical taste dominated all studies – so value comes into it. As concerns Mughal art I am not sure, but there is the unstated view that Mughal portraits are not up to European standards. To the Victorian administrators in India, while miniatures were pleasing and even beautiful, they were in essence decorative art, and by decorative, they meant 'two-dimensional'. This is clear from their next statement: the criteria for high art was naturalism and the importance of noble ideals, as was the case with the history paintings of Victorian academic art, Alma-Tadema or Lord Leighton, for instance. And I would add that in Central Europe it was Hans Makart. But the core principle was naturalism or illusion of the perceptual world. However much they admired non-Western art, European collectors would never compare a European master with an Abul-Hasan or Mansur at the Mughal court – I accept that there were probably some exceptions – so they become the preserve of collectors or connoisseurs.

I agree that within Europe, there are lots of cultural differences, of course. But when you have these countries facing Africa and Asia, their cultural values override their keen interest. John Ruskin was deeply impressed with Indian decoration but never compared it with European painting or sculpture, which were on another level. In *Orientalism* Edward Said spoke of this collective representation as European self-definition in juxtaposition with the other – the construction of the rational self as opposed to the Oriental irrational. Thus within a universal hierarchy, even deep appreciation of a non-Western tradition fell short of comparing it with the highest form of Western art.

NOTES

1. Terry Smith, 'The Provincialism Problem', *Artforum* XIII, no. 1 (September 1974), 1.
2. Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
3. Octavio Paz, *Nobel Lecture*, 8 December 1990. https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1990/paz/lecture/ (last visited 26 July 2023).
4. Partha Mitter, 'Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery', *Art Bulletin*, Vol. XC, No. 1, December 2008, 534.
5. Stella Kramrisch, *Catalogue of the 14th Annual Exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* (Calcutta: December 1922), 3-4.
6. In his contribution to this edited book, Johannes Wieninger presents some of the most important players and their networks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
7. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978).
8. Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', *Partisan Review*, VI, No. 5, Fall 1939, 34-49.
9. *Modernism and its Discontents: Some Reflections on the Vexing Problem of the Centre and the Periphery*, conference, 8 April 2021. https://artmuseum.pl/en/wydarzenia/global-modernism-and-its-discontents
10. Anselm Franke, 'A World Frozen in Art', in *Para Politics: Cultural Freedom and the Cold War*, edited by Anselm Franke, Nida Ghouse, Paz Guevara, and Antonia Majaca (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt and Sternberg Press, 2021), 29.
11. E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1967), 5.
12. For more information on the conference, see https://www.ngprague.cz/en/event/3092/collecting-asian-art-in-prague-conference.
13. Personal communication, Ebba Koch, 20 November 2022.
14. Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 189-251.

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INDEX

Page numbers in **bold** refer to illustrations.

GALLERY WITH COLOUR PLATES

Plate 1. Sentaro Yoshimura: Bankoku zenzu. Meiji 21 (1888), 43 × 70 cm.
East Asian Library, UC Berkeley (A47). (See fig. 1, p. 32)

Plate 2. Kakuzo Okakura in kimono, Boston, 1904. Photographer unknown.
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA. (See fig. 2, p. 33)

Plate 3. *A Gust of Wind* by Emil Orlik. 1901. National Gallery in Prague.
Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.
(See fig. 3, p. 35)

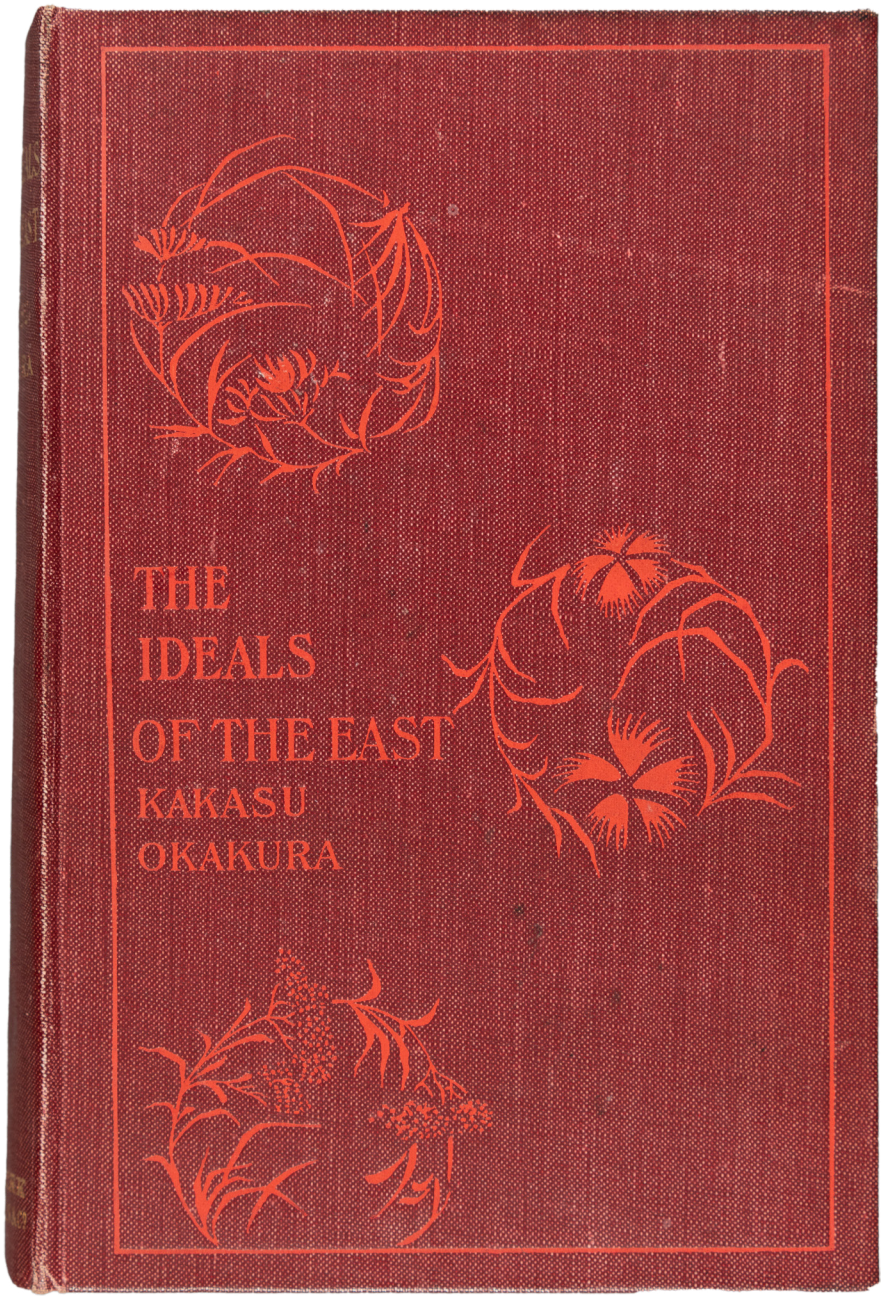


Plate 4. *The Ideals of the East: with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* by Kakasu [sic] Okakura. First edition. London: John Murray, 1903.
(See fig. 4, p. 37)

Plate 5. *Two Dragons Competing for the Jewel* by Taikan Yokoyama. 1904. Colour on silk, 51.2 × 76 cm. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA (C45). (See fig. 5, p. 39)

Plate 6. Bronze ritual vessel *gui*, Late Western Zhou dynasty, 9th century BC. Bronze, H. 14 cm, W. 30 cm. Originally Josef Martínek's collection, now the National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vp 2662. (See fig. 3, p. 67)

Plate 7. *Actor Segawa Kikunojo III in the Role of Oshizu, the Wife of Tanabe Bunzo* by Toshusai Sharaku, 1794. Woodblock print *Nishiki-e*, 33.7 × 23.5 cm. Originally from the collection of Wakai Kenzaburo, T. Straus-Negbaur, E. and F. Portheim, and Graphische Sammlung, now the National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 100. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See fig. 5, p. 68)

Plate 8. *Tsongkhapa*, Tibet, 2nd half of the 19th century. Colours and gold on canvas, 63.5 × 43 cm. Originally V. V. Štech's collection, now the National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 6023. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See fig. 7, p. 71)

Plate 9. *Portrait of Feliks Jasieński* by Leon Wyczółkowski. 1911. Pastel on paper. National Museum in Kraków (from Jasieński's collection). (See fig. 1, p. 83)

Plate 10. Stanislaw Glezmer's Japanese pavilion, Strugi (near Warsaw), after 1908. Colour photograph. photo Agnieszka Kluczewska-Wójcik (See fig. 2, p. 84)

Plate 11. *Portraits of Stanisław Dębicki and Damazy Kotowski* by Stanisław Dębicki and Damazy Kotowski. 1893. Oil on canvas. National Museum in Kraków. (See fig. 4, p. 91)

Plate 12. *Shishi* (Lion) attributed to Kano Tsunenobu (1636–1713). Edo period, ca. 1710. Colour and gold on wood. Part of a Tokugawa Memorial Shrine in Shiba (Edo/Tokyo). Courtesy of MAK – Museum of Applied Art, Vienna, inv. no. OR 3930–2. Collection Heinrich von Siebold. (See fig. 2, p. 101)

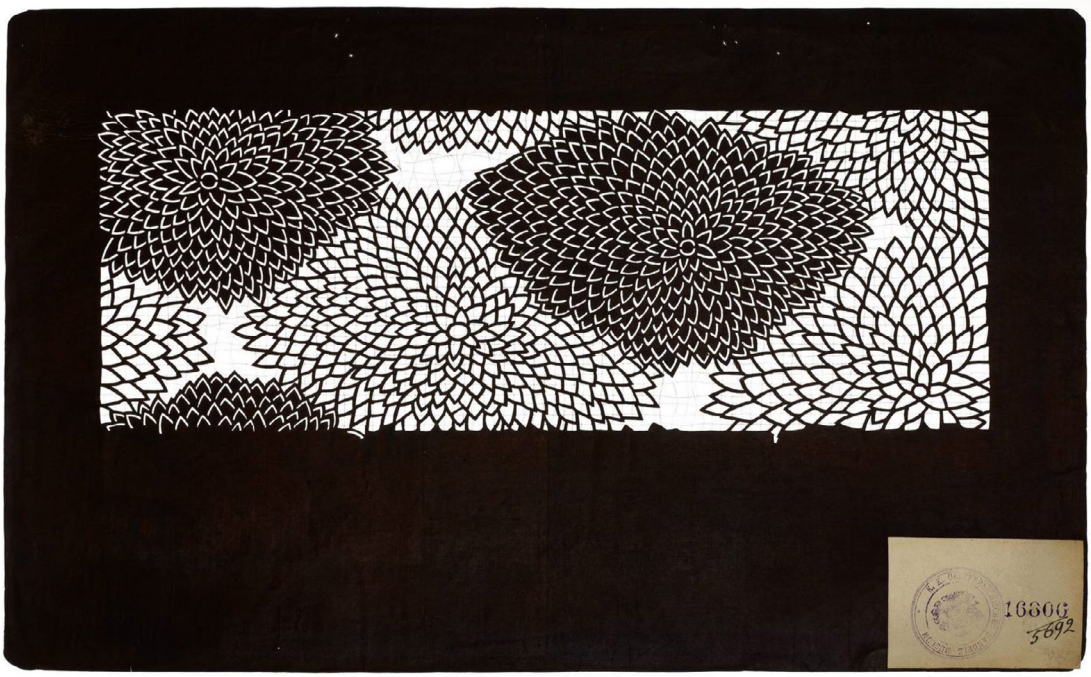


Plate 13. Katagami. Edo period, nineteenth century. Paper cut-out. Image courtesy of MAK –Museum of Applied Art, Vienna, inv. no. OR 3925–5692. Collection Heinrich von Siebold. (See fig. 3, p. 102)

Plate 14. Tea bowl, Black Raku ware. Edo period, seventeenth century.
Image courtesy of Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg, inv. no. 1901.271.
(See fig. 4, p. 103)

Plate 15. *Guanyin* by Xiao Songren. 1925. Ink and colours on paper, 280 × 100 cm. Originally in Vojtěch Chytil's collection, now National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 5708. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023.
(See fig. 2, p. 117)

Plate 16. *Hortensia* by Luo Baoshen. 1931. Ink and colours on silk, 33.5 × 44.5 cm. Originally in Vojtěch Chytil's collection, later in Vladimír Richter's collection, now National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 6710. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See fig. 3, p. 118)

Plate 17. *Landscape* by Shao Xilian. 1928. Ink and colours on paper, 89 × 39.2 cm. Originally in Vojtěch Chytil's collection, now National Gallery in Prague, inv. No. Vm 5723. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See fig. 4, p. 118)

Plate 18. *Fisherman* by Qi Baishi. Ink and colours on paper, 141.5 × 49 cm. Originally in Vojtěch Chytil's collection, now National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 1446. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See fig. 5, p. 120)

Plate 19. Selection of Qing dynasty imperial porcelains, donation of the PRC, 1959 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, photo: Jörg von Bruchhausen. (See fig. 1, p. 132)

Plate 20. Selection of Qing dynasty jade carvings, donation of the PRC, 1959 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, photo: Jörg von Bruchhausen. (See fig. 2, p. 132)

Plate 21. Chinese catalogue with black-and-white photographs, cover and inside page with Qing dynasty porcelains. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, photo (bottom): Claudia Obrocki. (See fig. 3, p. 133)

Plate 22. Lidded box in the form of a peach with inventory labels of the Palace Museum, Beijing, China, Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), eighteenth century, inv. no. OAS 1959–245 © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Asiatische Kunst, photo: Ricarda Brosch. (See fig. 5, p. 136)

Plate 23. Copper ewer. Iran, nineteenth century, Gift of the Mátyás Rákosi Iron- and Metalworks. Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asian Arts, inv. no. 52.60.1. Photograph: Ferenc Balázs. (See fig. 2, p. 144)

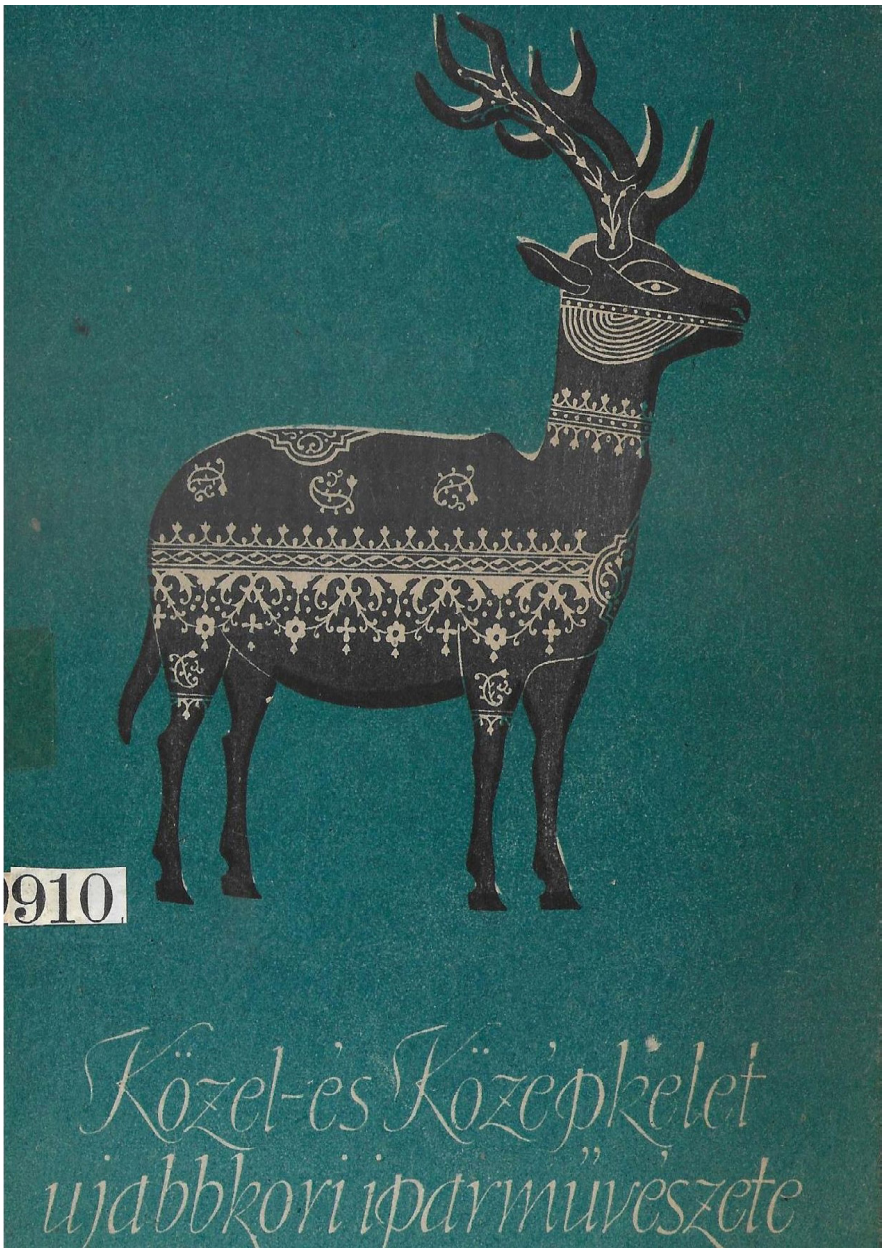
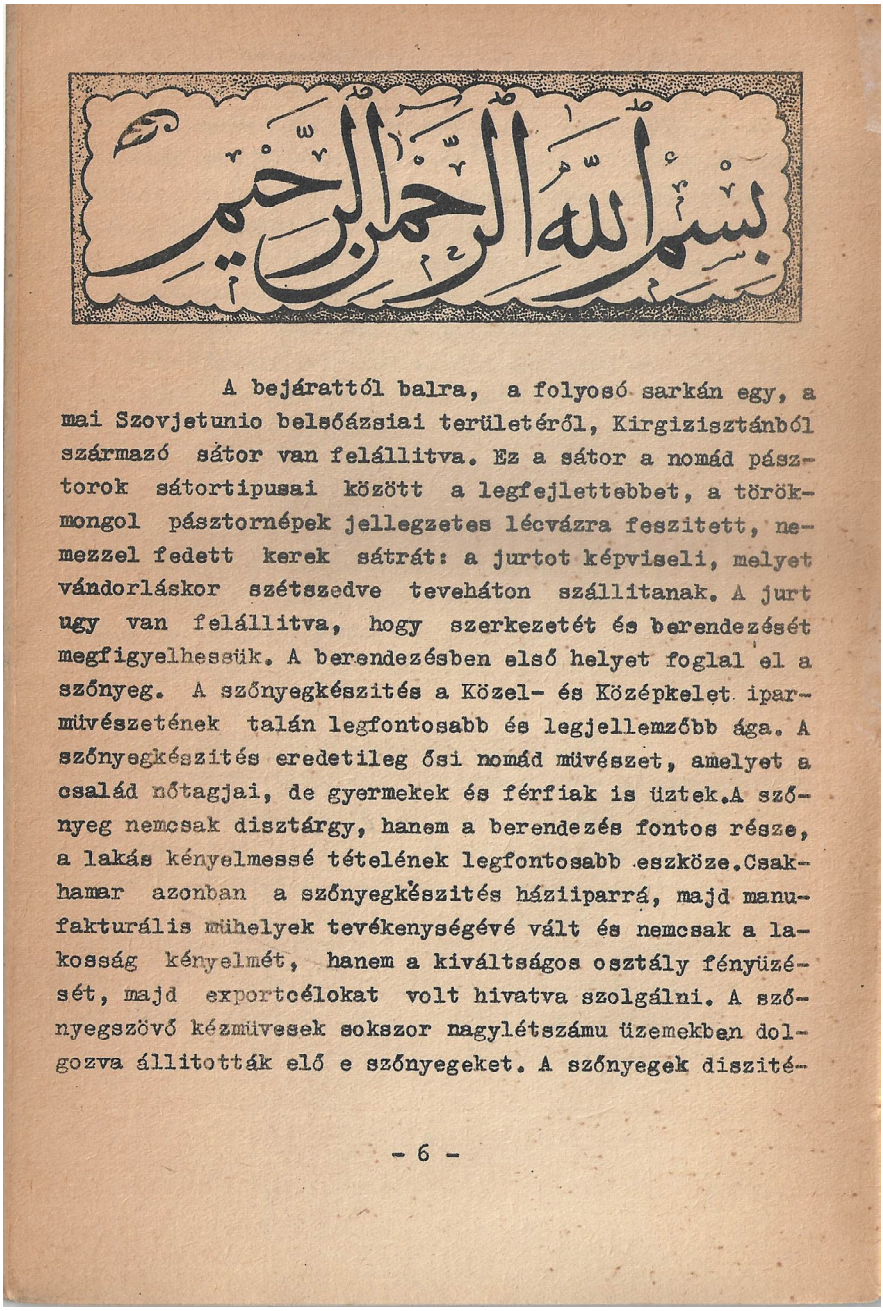


Plate 24. Front cover of *Közel- és Középkelet ujabbkori iparművészete,* exh. cat.. [Museum of Applied Arts, 1955]. (See fig. 3, p. 147)


بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

A bejárattól balra, a folyosó sarkán egy, a mai Szovjetunio belsőázsiai területéről, Kirgizisztánból származó sátor van felállitva. Ez a sátor a nomád pásztorok sátortipusai között a legfejlettebbet, a török-mongol pásztornépek jellegzetes lécvázra feszitett, nemezzel fedett kerek sátrát: a jurtot képviseli, melyet vándorláskor szétszedve teveháton szállitanak. A jurt ugy van felállitva, hogy szerkezetét és berendezését megfigyelhessük. A berendezésben első helyet foglal el a szőnyeg. A szőnyegkészités a Közel- és Középkelet iparmüvészetének talán legfontosabb és legjellemzőbb ága. A szőnyegkészités eredetileg ősi nomád müvészet, amelyet a család nőtagjai, de gyermekek és férfiak is üztek.A szőnyeg nemcsak disztárgy, hanem a berendezés fontos része, a lakás kényelmessé tételének legfontosabb eszköze.Csakhamar azonban a szőnyegkészités háziiparrá, majd manufakturális műhelyek tevékenységévé vált és nemcsak a lakosság kényelmét, hanem a kiváltságos osztály fényüzését, majd exportcélokat volt hivatva szolgálni. A szőnyegszövő kézmüvesek sokszor nagylétszámu üzemekben dolgozva állitották elő e szőnyegeket. A szőnyegek diszité-

- 6 -

Plate 25. Detail from *Közel- és Középkelet ujabbkori iparművészete,* exh. cat.. [Museum of Applied Arts, 1955]. (See fig. 4, p. 148)

Plate 26. *Evening* by V. S. Gaitonde, probably early 1950s. Tempera on paper, 56 × 43 cm. National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 926. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See fig. 3, p. 163)

Plate 27. *Peace to All Children Around the World* by Bhattacharya Chittaprosad, 1952. Print from the series *Without Fairy-Tales*, linocut on paper, 30.5 × 29.6 cm. National Gallery in Prague, inv. no. Vm 2481. Photograph © National Gallery in Prague 2023. (See fig. 4, p. 165)

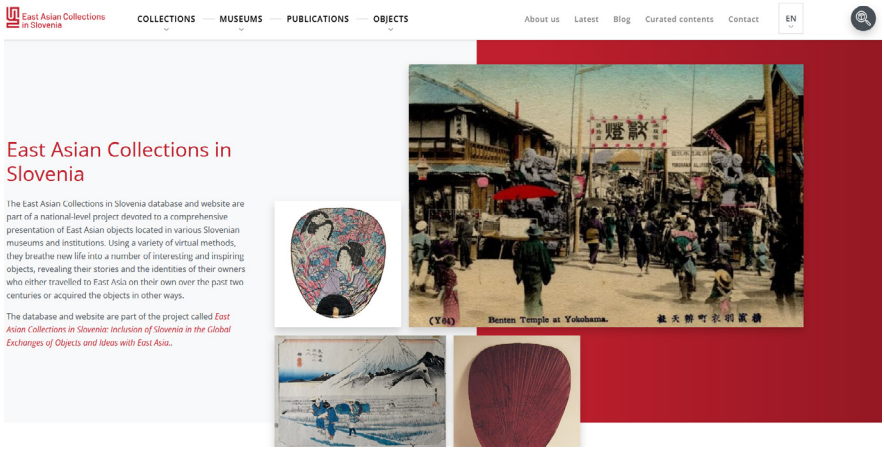


Plate 28. Screenshot of the VAZ database entry page. https://vazcollections.si/. (See fig. 1, p. 190)

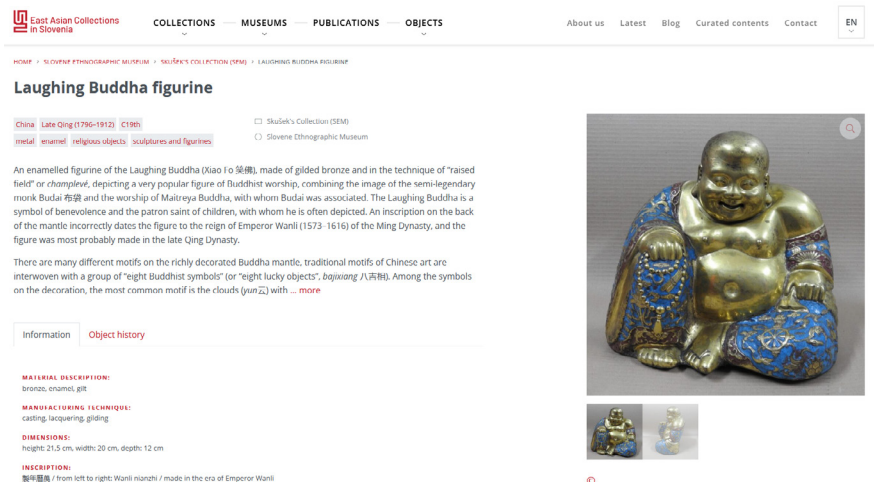


Plate 29. Screenshot of the VAZ database, with a description of individual objects. https://vazcollections.si/predmeti/kipec-smejocega-se-buda/. (Seee fig. 2, p. 193)

Plate 30. Rose Chair (Meiguiyi 玫瑰椅). Early Qing dynasty. Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. VAZ database: https://vazcollections.si/predmeti/rozni-stol/. (See fig. 4, p. 198)

Plate 31. 'Hagoromocho in Yokohama'. Colour postcard. Ivan Koršič's Postcard Album, Sergej Mašera Maritime Museum in Piran. VAZ database: https://vazcollections.si/predmeti/razglednica-hagoromocho-v-yokohami/. (See fig. 5, p. 199)