COMPETING PAINTING IDEOLOGIES IN THE MEIJI PERIOD, 1868-1912

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Introduction

In 1878, Ernest Fenollosa (1846-1908) arrived in Japan to teach at the newly established Tokyo Imperial University. While in Japan, Fenollosa took an interest in Japanese art, and he became an amateur collector. He was later able to have his small collection appraised by Meiji politician Kaneko Kentarō, who informed Fenollosa that nothing in his collection could be counted among the best of Japanese painting. Fenollosa replied that, without art museums, he had no way of understanding the characteristics of Japanese masterpieces. Following this encounter, Fenollosa reportedly began learning about Japanese art history through his university connections. Eventually, he became one of the central figures responsible for the promotion of European notions of fine arts, aesthetic theory, and art criticism to Meiji society, which changed how people understood the function of painting and supported it as a fine art. Fenollosa is also credited as one of the first to promote the “graceful side” of Japan to America and Europe as an artistic equal to the West.

Due to Fenollosa’s series of lectures on art and philosophy, he is often with beginning the movement to establish Japan’s first official fine art institution modeled after European and America academies. His 1882 speech to the Ryūchikai (Dragon Pond Society) presented traditional Japanese art as a foundation for the development of a contemporary art movement equal to European fine arts. Satō Dōshin describes the Ryūchikai as a “monolithic, satellite organization of various ministries of the government

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2 Shigehiko, 281.
that were intent on the promotion of industry and manufacturing” founded in 1879, but following Fenollosa’s speech, art promotion became one of its concerns. The ideas Fenollosa developed during his years in Japan, which were continued and expanded upon by his student Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913), formed the basis for the *nihonga* (neo-traditional Japanese-style painting) ideology and politicized painting in Japan in terms of Eastern idealism versus Western realism. Fenollosa created the starting point for the dichotomy between supporters of *nihonga* and *yōga* (Western-style painting) over the status of Japanese national painting that characterized the development of painting during the Meiji period. However, the larger history of painting ideologies during the Meiji period is more complex, and restricting a historical narrative to Okakura and Fenollosa does not reflect the full development of ideas concerning the representation of Meiji national identity through painting.

The introduction of European notions of fine arts and aesthetic philosophy coincided with the elevation of painting and artistic heritage as a significant portion of a modernized nation’s prestige at world’s fairs. From the mid-nineteenth century, world’s fairs and other international venues were the primary means for European and American nations to display aspects of national identity and accumulate prestige amongst the international community. A considerable portion of any country’s display at each exhibition was devoted to advancements in technology, science, industry, manufacturing, and commerce, but the presentation of artistic ability was equally important. A nation’s art displays presented a constructed history of unique artistic tradition that could be traced from the past to the present’s most talented artists. Art was considered to be one of “the landmarks of civilisation [sic]” that served to describe the current state of “social
progress” in “the most celebrated nations of the earth.”³ National painting, or history painting, was an important part of a world’s fair. It presented great and recognizable moments of a nation’s history to a large public audience who could view the painting as a means for understanding the national characteristics of a nation and its people. The books by Victoria Weston and Satō Dōshin extensively cover this aspect of the formation of national identity through painting in Japan. However, these works and others often overlook the catalogues of all the paintings shown at the exhibitions. Nor do they look at how the inclusion of traditional paintings at world’s fairs exhibitions affected or reflected the process of adapting Japanese painting to fit the image of modern Japan.

For Japan, participation in world’s fairs, beginning with the 1876 Vienna Universal Exhibition, meant the eventual adoption of European concepts of fine art. Painters and art critics entered the political realm during the Meiji period and took an active part in trying to assert Japanese national identity through painting. European thought about art was imported and internalized by people like Okakura as the means to express a construction of Meiji identity that was concurrent with Western views of modern industrialized nations while preserving the uniqueness of Japan as an East Asian country. Stefan Tanaka calls the process of developing an artistic identity in non-Western countries a “re-arrangement of existing forms from sociocultural archives” rather than invention.⁴ This gave painting a new social function of recording ideas through images, and transmitting them through the visual medium for Japanese and international audiences. During the 1880s, paintings and other types of art in Japan were moved out of

private collections, temples, and the Imperial Household, and placed in museums and other public spaces. Paintings became larger to reflect the change in intended audience across all types of styles.

The adoption of European art and aesthetics was part of a broader movement to modernize Japan that initiated following the return of the Iwakura Embassy in 1873. In 1871, nearly a hundred representatives of the Meiji government and students left Japan on a tour of European and American countries that had diplomatic relations with Japan. The group consisted was important Meiji figures like Ōkubo Toshimichi, Itō Hirobumi, and Kume Kunitake. Members of the Embassy returned to Japan and assumed prominent roles in the Meiji government. The record of the mission, *Tokumei Zenken Taishi Bei-Ō Kairan Jikki* compiled by Kume, captured the impressions of the diplomats about modern Europe. The official report of the mission reveals the how the Iwakura representatives understood the phenomenon of European and American success as modern nations. The report saw all the countries of the world as part of a global competition for resources. The countries in Europe were currently the most successful, and therefore most powerful, nations while weaker countries were overwhelmed in the form of imperialism.\(^5\) The current situation in China was an example a weaker country succumbing to the imperial powers from Europe and America, thus failing in the competition of progress. The report noted that the success of these nations was a recent occurrence, but it had developed from a long history of building knowledge and specific social and cultural skills and preserving these acquisitions through recorded history and celebrating a country’s past. It saw that

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the countries of the West enjoyed their current world position due to a shared historical background that had produced industrialization and other facets attributed to the success of modern civilizations. Eugene Soviak states that the overall message of the Iwakura Embassy’s report was that the adoption of modern science, technology, and military tactics could benefit Japan, but it would not be feasible for the Meiji government to expect to become a world power by only material modernization and direct adoption of ideas. The report emphasized that the international power of Western European countries was in part due to a number of historical, social, and cultural factors. The recognition of the many unquantifiable factors in the development of modern industrial nations shaped how members of the Iwakura Embassy approached the modernization of Japan after returning home. The elements of selection and preservation of specific traditions, historic ideas, and cultural beliefs became an important part of conceptualizing modern Meiji Japan and creating a national identity in the wake of the abolishment of the feudal system. The developments in painting and aesthetic thought during the Meiji period occurred against this intellectual backdrop as painting became part of the creation of Japan’s national identity and international image.

Although portions of Okakura and Fenollosa’s rhetoric on art preservation was adopted by groups like the Ryūchikai, differing ideologies emerged regarding what forms and styles would become Meiji national painting. This is reflective of the slow and complex process of adapting European ideas into Meiji society rather than all encompassing Westernization. As result, three main ideologies developed during the Meiji period that corresponded to the types of styles being practiced during the time. The

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6 Soviak, 24-27.
7 Soviak, 32.
first consisted of those who supported the work of traditionally trained painters working in styles, techniques, and mediums from painting schools established during or before the Edo period. Many of these supporters were prominent members of the new Meiji aristocracy. The second group was yōga, or Western-style, painters who had completely adopted Europeans techniques, mediums, elements of composition, and subject matter. The earliest of these painters were often trained in Japanese styles, but through books or foreign teachers living in Japan, learned the basics of oil painting and drawing. Eventually, aspiring paintings were able to study in Europe at respected ateliers, and they returned to Japan seeking similar support that their peers in Europe enjoyed. The term “yōga” was used in the 1870s, but in referred to all types of Western pictorial arts. It was during the twentieth century that yōga was used to refer to Japanese oil painting.8 For this study, yōga will be used to refer to consciously national oil painting after the 1880s when the dichotomy of Okakura and Fenollosa was created. The final category was nihonga, or Japanese painting. However, nihonga was often referred as the “neo-traditional” style during the Meiji period because it combined European techniques of perspective, shadows, and a certain amount of anatomical realism with Japanese coloration, materials, delineated forms, and motifs. The purpose was to create a style that was modern in terms of Western aesthetics, but consciously Japanese and connected to the country’s traditions and history.9

There were many forces that determined the degree of support that each ideology received throughout the Meiji period. The two primary external factors were foreign art

8 Murakami Mizuho, “Meiji Japan and Cultural Identity: An Examination of Yoga at the 1900 Paris Exposition” (MA thesis, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2009), 70, note 5.
critics who admired certain types of Japanese painting for familiar aesthetic qualities like realism, and the demands of the foreign export market that shaped international perceptions of Japanese identity through the taste in decorative goods. The popularity of Japanese art is known as *japonisme*, and it was characterized by the demand for lacquer, porcelain, bronze work, *ukiyo-e* prints, and other types of decorative goods prized for their “Oriental exoticism.” Appreciators of Japanese art romantically saw Japan as a nation “imbued with a deep love, appreciation and almost reverence for art,” and, by the 1880s, the presence of Japanese art was seen in the homes of Americans and Europeans.\(^\text{10}\) The tastes and trends in the foreign market were a constant deterrent to the reception of contemporary Meiji *nihonga* and *yōga* painters whose works were dismissed in favor of works associated with Edo that were free from any perceived Western influences.\(^\text{11}\) It also ensures the support of traditional painting schools by Meiji officials who focused on the export market.

Internally, Japanese national painting was affected by the interpretations and beliefs of artists, critics, and intellectuals who introduced and elaborated on European art theories and aesthetics. Okakura and Fenollosa formed the center of a well-connected clique of painters, politicians, and scholars who favored a progressive painting style. However, the importation of Western art ideas carried the implications of superiority of Western aesthetics as well which become an influence in the governmental institutionalization of *yōga* in the 1890s. This thesis will examine how the domestic formation of painting ideologies affected the international reception of Japanese art. In


addition it will cover the efforts by Japanese writers to educate foreign audiences on the
qualities and history of Japanese art, while comparing those texts to contemporary
publications by European and American writers. Throughout the Meiji Period, there was
little recognition of Japanese writings in foreign publications, which suggests that by the
end of the Meiji period, a national painting style failed to emerge despite the efforts to
adapt European aesthetics and art to Japan.
Chapter 1: Japanese Painting During the First Decade of the Meiji Period

During the first decade of the Meiji period, the government’s institutional support for painting and art can be characterized though analysis of participation in international exhibitions of the 1870s and the administration of the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō (Technical Art School). The government’s attitude was characterized by the support of Western-style artistic instruction in institutions as part of a larger nation-wide campaign to Westernize Japanese industry and manufacturing. The presentation of painting and other types of art at world’s fairs was motivated by a similar goal of promoting economic expansion through the support of the export of decorative goods that were in vogue in America and Europe by the 1860s. In both cases, these were continuations of trends set just prior to the Meiji Restoration. Europe received its first major exposure to Japanese decorative goods through an exhibit called “the Japanese Court in the International Exhibition” organized by Rutherford Alcock, the British Minister to Japan, for the 1862 International Exhibition. The exhibit included numerous samples of metalworking, woodworking, ivory, lacquer ware and other examples of Japanese decorative goods collected by Alcock and other foreign residents of Yokohama. Alcock praised the collection as representing the best of Japanese industrial arts. However, many of the goods on display were of recently made for the export market as Japanese manufactures

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12 In the case of the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō, bijutsu (美術) is used. However, in the context of the 1870s, it is more appropriate to translate it as “art” rather than “fine art” as it is translated in Satō Dōshin, Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty, trans. Nara Hiroshi (Los Angeles: the Getty Research Institute, 2011), 348.
had already begun to respond to the demands of European collectors of Japanese goods.\(^\text{14}\) Thus, not only was the exhibit not an official representation of Japan, but the items displayed were not necessarily representative of Japanese art.

In 1872, the Meiji government began preparing for the Vienna Universal Exhibition of 1873 through a series of domestic exhibitions held in Kyoto and Tokyo that showcased the various pieces of artwork, historical items, and manufactured goods. The Kyoto exhibition in the spring of 1872 featured a wide variety of displays ranging from Edo period armor and weapons, including a sword said to have belonged to Toyotomi Hideyoshi, to the lager produced by an Osaka brewery.\(^\text{15}\) In a review of the Tokyo exhibition, a reporter for *The Far East* commented on the items displayed. With regards to paintings, the reporter noticed a few good examples of Japanese painting alongside “wretched daubs of oil painting” and poor engravings. The author advised foreign visitors that they would find the relics of ancient Japan far more interesting, and that they should attend the exhibition to encourage the government’s efforts to Westernize.\(^\text{16}\) A final exhibition in Tokyo was open for one week to the public and foreigners in December 1872 after a private viewing for the emperor and distinguished guests. An estimated six hundred tons of art and goods destined for the Japanese display in Vienna were on display. After viewing displays that held ceramics, examples of Japanese wild game, and a giant paper lantern (figure 1), built specifically for the Vienna exhibition, *The Far East* reported concluded that no other country east of India would be better represented in


\(^{15}\) “The Kioto Exhibition,” *The Far East* 2 (May 1, 1872): 280.

Vienna. The reporter made no reference to paintings in the December Tokyo exhibition, and while this does not mean no paintings by contemporary artists were shown, the articles mentioned suggest that the government’s focus of the exhibitions was on the promotion of decorative arts, manufactured goods, and natural resources.

The government officially agreed to participate in the Vienna Exhibition in 1871. Over the next two years, extensive preparation, which included the aforementioned domestic exhibitions, was made under a specially appointed committee. 600,000 yen was allotted to provide the necessary preparation and training of artisans to ensure a successful appearance at the Meiji government’s first international exhibition. Two publications associated with Japan’s participation in Vienna contributed to later discussions of fine arts and painting. The term bijutsu first appeared the Japanese committee’s translation of the German program in reference to the various art sections of the exhibition. However, according to Amagai Yoshinori’s analysis of German and Japanese programs for Vienna, it was not until after the exhibition that all of the German words translated as bijutsu were explained in Japanese. In the committee’s official record of the exhibition published in December 1873, applied arts were distinguished from fine arts as art used for everyday decoration compared to art meant to display the skillfulness of the artist. Prior to this, bijutsu was not distinguished from gijutsu (技術), which referred to the technical skill involved into production of a craft. The experience learned by the exhibition committee and government officials sent to Vienna would prove

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18 Conant, “Refractions of the Rising Sun,” 82-3.
20 Michele Marra, Modern Japanese Aesthetics, a Reader (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999), note 16, 70.
valuable for the next major world’s fair, and the Meiji government’s conception of fine arts came more in line with Western notions of fine art as representative of national character.

Preparation for the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia began two years before the event. Over eighteen months, 7,000 packages and a small army of workers were sent to construct the Japanese exhibit. Determined to outdo the showing at Vienna, the Meiji government supplied $70,000 in advances to decorative art manufacturers to supply pieces. With regards to the history of Meiji national painting, the description of the Japan’s art section in the official catalogue shows how national qualities were linked to painting in the 1870s. It was published in English by the Japanese commission under Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830-78), Minister of the Interior, and Saigō Tsugumichi (1843-1902), the brother of Saigō Takamori. In the descriptive section of Japan’s submissions to department four, fine arts, the catalogue frequently uses “national character” in regards to painting and aesthetics, and it addresses frequent Western criticisms of Japanese painting. The introduction fine art section begins with an acknowledgement of the popularity of Japanese art amongst foreign art critics and the growing number of incomplete collections of Japanese “industrial art” in overseas museums. It explains that the painting of Japan owes greatly to Chinese painting traditions, especially with regards

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23 Saigō Tsugumichi is listed as “Tsukumichi” in the text. See the Imperial Japanese Commission to the International Exhibition at Philadelphia, 5.
to subject matter, but has since “acquired a national character, which at present greatly distinguishes it from the Chinese.”

The fine arts description also provides instruction on how to view Japanese paintings properly in order to avoid unnecessary criticism stemming from comparisons to modern Western painting. The catalogue states that Japanese painting lacked the “accuracy and plasticity” in the depiction of subjects, but made up for it with use of color and implications of movement that are appropriate to the subject. The Japanese treatment of horses in painting is given as an example. Horses and other larger animals, it explains, are “inferior to foreign artists” in regards to scientifically realistic depictions. However, Japanese painters make up for this by capturing “extraordinary vigor” of the subject with relatively few brushstrokes. Flowers, too, it says are sometimes treated in a similar manner as these paintings are completed in a matter of minutes in front of onlookers. The catalogue also elaborates on what it means by Japanese national character and how it relates to painting. The tradition of Chinese philosophy that concerns itself with the harmony of nature is represented in Japanese painting and poetry as the beauty of nature, and because of this, Japanese painters tend to prefer nature scenes as their subjects rather than “historical pictures.”

Making up the Japanese entries for paintings was a selection of works by eighteen painters from Tokyo and Kyoto entered in the catalogue as part of “Class 411.—Water Color Pictures.” Although, their paintings are listed as “water color,” this should not be confused with European watercolor painting. All of the artists in this group were painters.

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that worked in traditional Japanese painting schools. Kikuchi Yōsai (1788-1878) and Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-89) are perhaps the most recognizable amongst the listed artists. Both painters were trained under the Kanō School, which used ink and light colors and was the official painting school of the shogunate during the Tokugawa Period. The other painters on the list primarily consists of well known painters who were know at the time for their skill as kachōga (bird-and-flower pictures) or landscape painters. Many were trained in either the nanga or Shijō traditions as well by respected artists of the Tokugawa period like Tani Bunchō (1763-1841). Nanga, or bunjinga (literati painting), was a style of painting associated with Confucian scholarship, and its subject matter typically alluded to a classical poem or piece of literature. The Shijō School specialized in decorative landscape and kachōga. When the list of painters is compared to the catalogue’s description of Japanese art, it becomes clear that the painters were selected as examples of the traits that were described as being characteristic of Japanese “national character.” The text describes the merits of both Chinese literati painting, referred to in the text as “szumiye” (sumie, or Chinese ink paintings), and the realistic depictions of birds, flowers, and small animals associated with the Shijō School. In both cases, perceived deficiencies compared to Western painting and positive aspects are explained, as well as how the paintings are made and what qualities are considered to be the best

27 For the full list of artists, see Appendix A.
28 The Imperial Japanese Commission to the International Exhibition at Philadelphia, 100.
according to Japanese aesthetics tastes. The paintings seem to have been well received as suggested by an award given to Kikuchi Yōsai’s submission.29

The description of Japanese arts under the exhibition’s section of fine arts, the text refers to the various arts as “industrial art” rather than “fine art.” While the official record prepared after Vienna in 1873 had described the difference between the German words for applied arts and fine arts, this suggests that the distinction between the two was not completely recognized or not yet considered politically by the commission for the Philadelphia exhibition. The main goal of government’s participation in both fairs seems have been part of the Meiji government’s efforts to encourage commerce and manufacturing during the 1870s. For the Vienna exhibition, participation was partially motivated the opportunity to reduce standing debts inherited from the Tokugawa period through the chance to improve foreign trade.30 A similar situation motivated Ōkubo’s involvement in the Philadelphia commission as America was a large export market and a successful exhibition could help reduce foreign loans.31 The bulk of the arts section prepared by the Japanese commission for the Centennial Exhibition also seems to confirm economic benefit as the main goals for participation. Much of the items listed under the various classifications for art included bronze vases, engravings, and wood or ivory carvings, items which were popular amongst foreign collectors of Japanese decorative goods. Many of the exhibits were listed as displays from the Kiryū Kōshō Kaisha (the first Japanese Manufacturing and Trading Company), a semi-governmental

30 Amagai, 36.
31 Conant, “Refractions of the Rising Sun,” 83.
export company established after Vienna. Likely, the formation of the Kiryū Kōshō Kaisha was due to the reluctance of Japanese merchants to ship goods to Europe for the Vienna exhibition commented on in the Philadelphia catalogue. The discussion of “national character” found in Japanese arts was recognized as important to participation in the Centennial Exhibition at least with regards to drawing distinctions between Japanese and Chinese art for a foreign audience. The use of such vocabulary shows that the Meiji exhibition commission understood the importance of national identity and its relation to art at world’s fairs. But, notions of an institutionalized style of national painting that was conscious of international reception had not been realized. The government promotion and support of painting and other arts in Japan during the 1870s shows that art was viewed by the government as part of its mission to improve international commerce and manufacturing.

The government’s utilitarian attitude toward art during the first decade of the Meiji period was reflected in official sponsorship of art through institutions, which was a continuation of the view held by the Tokugawa regime. In 1861, a Western painting division was established as part of the Bansho Shirabesho (Institute for the Study of Foreign Documents). Kawakami Tōgai (1827-81), a nanga and Shijō trained painter, was made head of the new division created to study foreign painting techniques. Using a small number of Dutch texts and homemade utensils, Tōgai taught himself and others to use linear perspective and other techniques of Western-style painting. After the Meiji Restoration, Tōgai opened an art school in Tokyo called the Chōkō Dokugakan where he

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33 The Imperial Japanese Commission to the International Exhibition at Philadelphia, 3.
taught students Western painting techniques. Tōgai achieved considerable skill in oil painting, but throughout his life he viewed it in the same light as the government and preferred nanga painting for artistic expression. It was a view that he passed on to most of his early pupils at the Bansho Shirabesho and his art school. The Meiji government recognized Tōgai’s skills in photographic realism as well. In 1872, Tōgai published a manual on Western-style art education, and, with the help of his pupil Takahashi Yuichi (1824-94), he prepared a pencil drawing system to be used in elementary schools as a replacement for tradition brush and ink instruction. Tōgai and Yuichi’s system remained in place for over a decade until the government’s attitude to art and Western-style painting changed. Before his suicide in 1881, Tōgai continued to work for the government as a drawing and painting instructor and cartographer for the military.

Though Tōgai is sometimes considered one of the first yōga painters, he did not see Western-style painting from an aesthetic perspective as other painters who became associated with the promotion of Western-style painting as potential source of national painting.

After Vienna, Sano Tsunetami (1822-1902), the vice-president of the Japanese commission, and Gotfried Wagener, a German adviser to the Vienna and Philadelphia committees, remained in Europe to tour art schools and museums. Two years later, Sano and Wagener submitted reports to the government recommending the establishment of museums and industrial arts programs modeled after institutions in England and Austria.

However, it was a different plan backed by Itō Hirobumi and the Ministry of Public Works that was accepted by the government. In 1876, the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō was established as part of the Kōbu Daigakkō (the Imperial College of Engineering). Itō hoped that by adding instruction in European painting, drawing, and other artistic techniques, the college would function as Japan’s first modern technical design school.\(^3\)

The Barbizon painter Antonio Fontanesi (1818-1882) was one of three Italian artists hired to teach at the school. Fontanesi was responsible for teaching scientifically accurate methods of drawing and painting. However, Fontanesi was “essentially a romantic painter specializing in tranquil, pastoral landscapes at twilight” rather than a design oriented teacher.\(^3\) While he taught linear perspective, chiaroscuro, and realism to his students, he was a romantic painter who encouraged artistic expression amongst his students that was not in line with the purpose of the school. The first class at the school was sixty students, including six women.\(^3\) For his role at the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō, Fontanesi is credited with a lasting influence on the later development of Western-style painting in Japan. Amongst his students were Asai Chū (1856-1907), Koyama Shōtarō (1857-1916), and Takahashi Yuichi who would become leading proponents of Western-style painting during the Meiji period.

The Japanese government spent much of the first decade of the Meiji period officially sponsoring painting from two pragmatic perspectives. At world’s fairs, it promoted tradition styles of painting and art that were identifiably Japanese for economic reasons, and domestically, the government supported Western-style painting and drawing

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\(^3\) Amagai, 38, 40.
\(^3\) Rosenfield, 199.
for scientific and industrial purposes. The Japanese government’s support of painting in the context a fine art or national art as it was understood by other modern industrialized nations would not occur until the second half of the 1880s. However, early foreign reception of Japanese art was also dismissive of its national or fine art qualities did evaluate Japanese art according to Western aesthetic attitudes, and other foreign observers would later echo their comments. Many of these critics rejected the idea elevating Japanese pictorial arts to the same level as fine art painting in Europe, while at the same time praising the uniqueness of Japanese art styles from a decorative or industrial art perspective that was characteristic of japonisme during the late nineteenth century. As we will see, pictures and art from Japan was valued in Europe and America for its uniqueness and association with a romantic idealized nostalgia for pre-industrial society through the feudal remnants of Japanese culture.

As previously mentioned, articles in The Far East praised Japanese decorative goods like bronze work and carvings bound for Vienna. With regards to painting, an 1873 article on a painting, titled The Mates, used it as a basis for generalizations and criticisms of Japanese painting that would echoed by later European and American aficionados of Japanese art. The painting is a kachōga (bird-and-flower painting) depicting of a pair of peacocks resting in a flowering bush with a tree in the background. It is done with elements of realism associated with the Shijö style. The artist’s name is not given, but the article estimates that the painter must be one of the most skilled in Japan. The article states that The Mates is an example of both the “perfection and ignorance” of Japanese art. The author saw the attention to detail and patience of observation as representing the best qualities of Japanese painting and believes that the painting “would make a pre-
Raphael-ite’s mouth water.” Without a foundation in Japanese painting theory, the author was identifying the realism prized in Western painting at the time in this and other Shijō-style paintings of birds, flowers, fish, and small animals. However, the article states that in other subject matter, particularly paintings of people or landscapes, Japanese artists fall short of European standards. 

Published just a year before the Centennial Exhibition, George A. Audsley and James L. Bowes’ two-volume book, *Keramic Art of Japan*, was one of the first foreign texts devoted to Japanese art. The first volume is devoted to a lengthy introduction to Japanese art with a focus on painting, sculpture, common subjects, and religious art pieces, while the second volume is a collection of pictures of various types of Japanese art pieces. In the introduction, the book provides several statements on the nature and characteristics of Japanese art in a manner similar to the Japanese catalogue for the Philadelphia exhibition. It begins by explaining that certain aspects of Japanese art had originated in China, but those aspects have uniquely developed since that time, and the book then praises Japan for its willingness to open up to new ideas unlike China. The appreciation of nature, love for humor and the grotesque, and the love of expressive action, color combinations, and forms are specified as three central characteristics of Japanese artistic appreciation. The general qualities noticed by the authors are similar to the national characteristics provided Japanese commissioners in the Philadelphia catalogue. Like the commentator in *The Far East*, Audsley and Bowes felt that Japanese art excelled at faithful reproductions of birds, small animals, fish, and flowers, but was

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39 The artist of this painting is not specified in the source. See, “*The Mates,*” *The Far East* 3 (March 17, 1973): 236.
weakest when depicting the human form, which they said was on par with the figures found in decorative manuscripts, or other objects, like clouds or water, that could not be represented realistically by linear outline.\(^{41}\) Again, a foreign observer was drawn to the qualities found in Japanese art that were appealing to European aesthetic theory. With regards to the semi-realistic treatment of animals and plants found in Shijō painting, the foreign appreciation for *kachōga* was similar to that of those who prepared the Philadelphia catalogue, but it differed with regards to *nanga* painting, which is not mentioned in *Keramic Art of Japan*.

Despite its evaluation of Japanese art according to European aesthetics, it is interesting to note that Audsley and Bowes saw that Japanese art “creates strong emotions in the mind, rather than merely satisfies the eye.”\(^{42}\) This statement seems to suggest that the authors perceived that Japanese art was idealistic, rather than realistic, which was central to Okakura Kakuzō’s aesthetic thought in the 1880s. However, most important to the discussion of Meiji national painting is the statement that Japanese art was essentially decorative rather than fine art.\(^{43}\) Though the book is not a direct review of the exhibit at Vienna, the comments and thoughts in the book are strongly representative of *japonists* during the nineteenth. The trend began in the nineteenth as part of a sense of stagnation in European decorative goods and general sense of anxiety over industrialization, and saw the handcrafted goods from Japan as part of pre-industrial society. The tastes of foreigners like Audsley and Bowes became an important factor in

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\(^{41}\) Audsley and Bowes, xiii, xlv, xlvi.

\(^{42}\) Audsley and Bowes, xlv.

\(^{43}\) Audsley and Bowes, xli-xliv.
the development of Meiji painting ideologies, as international economic and prestigious recognition was related to the Japanese evaluation of painting and its allied arts.

Aside from the official sponsorship of painting and art, other developments during the first decade of the Meiji period would have an impact on the following years as different understandings of painting’s social functions were imported and changed.

Takahashi Yuichi, a pupil of Kawakami Tōgai at the Bansho Shirabesho and Charles Wirgman (1832-1891), was one of the earlier painters who saw the adoption of Western-style painting as an alternative aesthetic medium capable of representing Japanese national identity. Wirgman was an English resident of Yokohama who worked as an illustrator and was the publisher of *Japan Punch*, and he taught Western painting and drawing techniques to Japanese artists. Yuichi believed that contemporary Japanese art was in a period of stagnation due to the influences of *nanga* and *ukiyo*, and he saw the realism in Dutch lithographs as a relief. Yuichi felt that *nanga* had become too esoteric, while *ukiyo* had become “bent on vulgarity and insignificance.”

His thinking was unique because not only did he see oil painting as a new source of aesthetics for Japan, but he also believed that use of Western-style painting techniques could be adapted for public use as a tool for building national identity. In an 1865 treatise written for the Bansho Shirabesho, Yuichi wrote “it would be to the advantage (of our country)… if the virtue of its saints, heroes, and sages were disseminated by portraits painted from living models (*seisha*), if in times of peace the national folk dances and music were illustrated, and if the army and battles were depicted during war, so that people even thousands of

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Yuichi saw realistic painting as a means to distribute factual representations of cultural pride to the Japanese people. He also considered the development of art to be important to Japan’s status as a modern nation on the international level. To support his ideas, Yuichi opened his own art school in Tokyo in 1873. He believed the support of painting was important for national and public benefits.

The skill achieved by the early Japanese Western-style painters is shown in Takahashi’s 1877 *Salmon* (figure 2). The hyper-realistic painting depicts a partially filleted salted salmon hanging from a rope, a familiar sight in a Japanese home and common motif in decorative goods. Details like the texture of the skin, the marbling of the flesh, and fibers of the rope are captured in full color. Audsley attributes this motif to the practice of preparing fish for guests. The choice of Takahashi’s subject matter for *Salmon* was perhaps motivated by his belief that Japanese cultural practices could also be shared through realistic representation in oil painting. Regardless of Yuichi’s motivation for the painting, through the level of realism attained it is possible to understand the Meiji and Tokugawa governments’ support of Western-style painting for practical benefits.

Another development in Meiji painting and aesthetics that occurred during the Westernization movement during the 1870s was the translations and writings on aesthetic theory by Nishi Amane (1829-1897). Nishi studied in Holland during the years before the

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47 A partially filleted salmon carved in wood and coated in lacquer can be found in Audsley and Bowes, xxxiii.
Meiji Restoration, and returned as a major supporter of discarding Confucian thought. In 1874, he published a translation of Joseph Haven’s *Mental Philosophy* (1857) in which he used the term *zenbigaku*, “the science of the good and beautiful.”48 This term was one of 787 new words devised by Nishi for conveying foreign philosophical concepts that did not exist in Japanese. Roughly half of these were new kanji compounds, while the others were terms from Japanese and Chinese Buddhist texts that Nishi appropriated for his work.49 By doing so, Nishi made European aesthetic theory accessible to classically educated Meiji politicians and literati. In his own book *Theory of Aesthetics* (*Bimyōgakusetsu*), Nishi explained the term aesthetics as one of three elements of humanity in addition to law and morality that allowed humans to sense the inherent beauty of an object through imagination. The recognition of beauty was explained as the perception of *omoroshi* in the form of an object, which was part of humanity inherent ability to judge objects free of personal interests.50 Nishi was one of the earliest Japanese scholars introducing foreign aesthetic theory, and the lasting influence of his ideas is seen in the later discussions of Japanese aesthetics and painting during the following decades.

Though there was developments in the aesthetic perception of painting that were moving towards European notions of fine art, institutional support for painting the first decade of the Meiji Period was utilitarian. On the international stage, the government promoted the works of artists working in traditional styles as part of the desire to increase the export of decorative goods. In state sponsored higher education, the government supported instruction in Western-style painting for the military and scientific benefits.

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48 Michele Marra, 18.
49 Michele Marra, 25-6.
This attitude can be seen in the treatment of painting at the First National Industrial Exhibition in 1877, which was the first of a series of domestic exhibitions started to promote industry and manufacturing in Japan. The painting jury of the exhibition included Kawakami Tōgai, and the distribution of awards reflected Tōgai’s personal aesthetic beliefs. The highest prizes were awarded to artists like Kikuchi Yōsai who worked in traditional styles of painting, while submissions by Western-style paintings were received lesser ones. However, starting in the last years of the 1870s and continuing into the 1880s, the concept of developing and supporting a national painting style became the central issue to painting ideology.

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51 Rosenfield, 200.
Chapter 2: The Creation of a Fine Arts School

The history of Japanese painting to during the 1880s is typically understood through central role of the thought and influences of Ernesto Fenollosa and Okakura Kakuzō. Fenollosa’s 1882 speech to the Ryūchikai (Dragon Pond Society) is often considered to be one of the pivotal moments in Meiji art history. In this speech and others to various Meiji politicians and art societies, Fenollosa is credited with starting art heritage conservation through the establishment of museums and a renewed government sponsorship of painting that saw it as a fine art in the 1880s. The period between 1878 and 1889 saw the codification of traditional and neo-traditional painting ideologies and serious effort to create a receptive art public through painting and art exhibitions and societies. It was marked by a major shift in the way genres of painting were viewed. Ukiyo, long understood as the “Popular School,” became associated with the negative aspects of the not-to-distant past. Paintings done in traditional styles were taken from private collections intended for viewing by a small number and thrust into a newly defined public space for art appreciation.52 With the changes in the way art was being perceived and the presentation of painting in a public space, it was now important for art societies, institutions, and the government to begin selecting the types of painting they wanted to include and exclude those that were considered publicly unacceptable for aesthetic, philosophical, or political reasons. In other words, during the Meiji period, as painting became the subject of national and international identity formation, what was

considered popular art and what was considered art for the upper classes was also changing due to internal and external factors. As Fenollosa and Okakura were central figures in the incorporation of nationalism into a neo-traditional painting cannon, known as *nihonga*, which led to the politicization of painting styles. Their espoused style came into political opposition with the Western-style painting ideology of people like Takahashi Yuichi. During this same time, external forces like *japonisme* assured the importance of supporting traditional styles.

While the government continued its utilitarian patronage of the arts until the establishment of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō (Tokyo School of Fine Arts) in 1889, many important Meiji figures were returning from extended trips from Europe and saw a disparity in the way European nations were supporting fine arts compared to Japan. Kuki Ryūichi (1852-1931) had spent time in France observing the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris as part of a Ministry of Education sponsored trip to study art and developments in education. While in there, he noticed that the French treated their artistic heritage as a source of national pride. Kuki determined that Japan could do the same with its own art, and he began promoting government sponsorship of traditional arts while supporting Western art only for technical applications. The following year, Kuki helped form the Ryūchikai. The society’s early membership consisted of many prominent figures and officials from the Ministries of Interior and Finance, which were heavily invested in the promotion of industry. The Ryūchikai began with three goals: the protection of pre-Meiji art, the promotion of traditional arts and crafts, and the establishment of a system of art

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53 Conant, “Refractions of the Rising Sun,” 84.
education. Though many of the members of the Ryūchikai were supporters of decorative art for the export market, its choice to promote art education along with the protection of historic works showed a major change in the Meiji government’s perception of art.

Around the same time, Ernest Fenollosa was hired by the Ministry of Education to teach political economics and philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University. Fenollosa arrived in Japan with connections to Meiji figures like Kaneko Kentarō (1853-1942), who had been a classmate at Harvard. Fenollosa took interest in Japanese art, and through his connections, Fenollosa was able to view the private painting collections of Tokyo aristocrats. His interests were not limited to traditional painting. According to Takahashi Yuichi, Fenollosa approached him about promoting Western-style painting in Japan. However, Fenollosa later met Kanō Tomonobu (1843-1912), who became Fenollosa’s for Japanese art history and painting. Tomonobu was a painter from the Kobikichō Kanō School who had also studied Western-style painting at the Bansho Shirabesho and later with Charles Wirgman. This early connection between Fenollosa and a painter traditionally trained in the Kanō style and practiced in Western-style painting is an important note because the fusion of both styles was central to the nihonga ideology that developed in the subsequent years. With the help of his students Okakura Kakuzō and Ariaga Nagao who acted as translators, Fenollosa spent his early years at the Tokyo Imperial University learning about Japanese aesthetics and art history. Fenollosa was also

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54 Satō 47.
55 Haga, 251.
introduced to Kanō Eitoku, head of the Nakabashi Kanō branch, who recognized Fenollosa’s skills in artistic appraisal with the honorary title Kanō Eitan Rishin.\(^{58}\) Through Kanō painters, Fenollosa learned about Japanese art in a traditional manner similar to his Meiji peers. Whether the ideas Fenollosa developed in the following years about modern Japanese art were his original thought or more reflective of the beliefs of his teachers is not clear. However, as a foreigner who was educated in Japanese art by recognized authorities in the painting world, Fenollosa’s public activities acted as external validation at a time when ideas and customs of Europe and America were considered as synonymous with civilization and modernization.

Fenollosa’s aforementioned speech, “An New Explanation of Art,” to the Ryūchikai covered a wide variety of issues he perceived in the Japan’s current art environment. In his introduction, Fenollosa stated that both the Eastern and Western contemporary arts were states of decline, and both regions were looking to each other for inspiration. The speech began with an explanation of art and beauty, stating that true art was distinguishable from crafts by its lack of purpose, including the intent to be aesthetically pleasing. This is what made a fine art painting different from a pair of skillfully made shoes. Fenollosa’s definition of true or fine arts was correction of the translation mentioned in the previous chapter that was made after the Vienna exhibition several years earlier, which stated that fine art was distinguishable, by its intent to display the skill of the artist. He believed that fine art was a work in which the artists conveyed a level of perfection that would normally be beyond the conception of the average observer. Fenollosa called this the manifestation of “the Idea,” referring to a Hegelian-
based notion of higher perfection unique to each era recognizable to humans and
carried through painting and other arts. Contemporary artists who clung to the
imitation of previous recognized masters would never be able to re-capture “the Idea” of
a previous time, as was the case with contemporary Japanese painters of traditional
schools. Therefore, Fenollosa felt that the public must support the independent
development of art in order to produce truly great art for that time. He believed many
elements of Japanese painting were far more suited for accomplishing this goal than
Western-style painting techniques. In closing, Fenollosa advised that it was up to the
government and public to establish systems of funding that will support current painters
and artists so they can develop their individual art, as well as establishing an
institutionalized art school to train artists in the techniques they would need to develop
into great artists.59 In this speech, Fenollosa recognizes the benefits of Japanese painting
techniques, but calls for a move away from traditional schools of painting. He also
addresses the problem of art patronage that had almost disappeared after the Meiji
Restoration due major changes affecting the political and financial status of samurai.

It is unclear how exactly receptive the members of the Ryūchikai were of
Fenollosa’s ideas. However, the publication of the Japanese translation by the Ryūchikai
five months later suggests at least moderate support particularly with the idea that art
societies should provide public spaces for the display of art. Following the initial
conception of the Ryūchikai, it was seen as a sort of umbrella society for anyone

59 This speech was transcribed in Japanese from English and published in November
1882 by the Ryūchikai as Bijutsu Shinsetsu. An English summary of its contents are
on the Truth of Art,” in Japanese Hermeneutics: Current Debates on Aesthetics and
interested in the promotion of Japanese art. However, whether or not the group should support the revival of unchanged former painting styles or encourage the development of new styles was a central issue. In the years following Fenollosa’s speech, the Ryūchikai became a conservative group, preferring to support painters who worked in established traditional styles leading to the ostracizing of those who favored the individual development of painters that had been espoused by Fenollosa’s 1882 speech.\(^{60}\)

The Ryūchikai began holding public exhibitions of contemporary painting and art along with ones featuring examples of previous masterpieces that had previously been kept private collections. Regarding, Fenollosa’s call for the creation of an artistically savvy public, the Ryūchikai was supportive. However, the exhibitions the group held during the early 1880s were extremely conservative with regards to contemporary painting, which prompted highly critical reviews in *The Japan Weekly Mail*. For the first Ryūchikai painting exhibition in 1882 held in Ueno Park, the rules for the painting section required that all submissions be within the confines of recognized styles like Kanō, *nanga*, or *Shijō*. Additionally, the paintings were required to be on silk and within certain size requirements. The awards by the jury, which was reported to have consisted of patriarchs from Tokyo-based schools, reflected the preference for traditional painting styles with the highest award being given to “a picture[,] which had no other merit or claim to attention than its suggestion of a famous old Chinese design.” Painters, who *The Japan Weekly Mail* felt were some of the best contemporary painters, expressed their displeasure by refusing to participate in the Ryūchikai’s second exhibition in 1884.\(^{61}\) The conservative focus of these exhibitions was a continuation of the 1877 National Industrial

\(^{60}\) *The Japan Weekly Mail*, April 10, 1886.

\(^{61}\) *The Japan Weekly Mail*, April 10, 1886.
Exhibition’s attitudes toward painting. Another exhibition held by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce was notably for the exclusion of Western-style painting.\footnote{Sato 50.}

Differences in painting preferences prompted two splits from the Ryūchikai. According to The Japan Weekly Mail, the dismal reception of the Ryūchikai’s first exhibitions and the selections the group sent to the Paris Exhibition of 1884 caused dissatisfaction within the supporters of traditional styles. The Ryūchikai sent over two hundred paintings to Paris for exhibition and sale between 1883 and 1884. However, the paintings, which were done by traditional artists and featured religious and historical subjects, failed to attract the attention of Parisians.\footnote{Foxwell, “Merciful Mother Kannon and its Audiences,” 335-36.} Consisting mainly of members affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, the dissidents formed their own painting society that was ideologically similar to the Ryūchikai.\footnote{The Japan Weekly Mail, April 10, 1886.} Others within the group some supported the idea of encouraging new artistic developments within Japanese painting outside the fixed traditional schools. In February 1884, Fenollosa, Okakura and a group of Japanese painters formed the Kangakai (The Painting Appreciation Society).

Initially, the Kangakai was provided a monthly forum for artists to discuss historical and contemporary work, but later that year, the Kangakai reorganized itself to promote living artists. It held its major first painting exhibition in January 1885 featuring seventy paintings by ten contemporary artists, and it held a second one the following year. The Kangakai exhibition in 1886 received positive reviews, and seemed to have garnered considerable public support as two thousand visitors attended during the three and a half days it was open, and it was reported that a large number of the paintings exhibited were...
Through these annual exhibitions and other gatherings, the Kangakai became the main forum for supporters of neo-traditional Japanese painting.\(^{66}\)

It was at the exhibitions of the Kangakai that Fenollosa and Okakura first encountered Hashimoto Gahō (1835-1908) and Kanō Hōgai (1828-88), two painters whose work would define the first generation of nihonga painters. Both painters were classically trained within the Kobikichō branch of the Kanō, but had encountered financial difficulties since the Meiji Restoration like many other traditional artists. Until he was hired as a painting instructor for the Imperial naval academy in 1871, Gahō supported his family by making pieces for shamisen and coats of mail armor.\(^{67}\) Similarly, Hōgai lived in poverty until he became involved with the Kangakai.\(^{68}\) The paintings of Hōgai and Gahō were frequently shown at the various domestic art exhibitions sponsored by the government and the Kangakai during the early 1880s where they drew the attention of Fenollosa and Okakura due to previous connections to the Kanō School.\(^{69}\) Their paintings show a combination of traditionally Japanese subject matter, like landscapes and Buddhist images, mixed with Western techniques like three-dimensional shading and perspective, especially in their later works.

Gahō’s *Moonlit Landscape* (figure 3) shows the incorporation of shading, single perspective, and a lack of negative space in the composition. Certain elements like the depiction of rocks use linear outlines, while the leaves of trees and clouds use color graduations and shading suggestive of Western painting. While Gahō was best known for

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\(^{65}\) *The Japan Weekly Mail*, April 24, 1886.

\(^{66}\) Fischer, 7-8.


\(^{68}\) Roberts, 46.

\(^{69}\) Fischer, 11-12.
his landscapes, Hōgai’s was well known for his Buddhist and mythological themed paintings, such as his *Kannon the Merciful Mother* (figure 4), which was one of his last paintings. In it, the representation of Kannon suggests a mix of Western-style color graduations and traditional delineation to illustrate the human form. Chelsea Foxwell states that the painting was ambivalent in terms of gender, style, and religious iconography that blend Buddhism and Christianity to present Kannon as similar to the Virgin Mary.\(^70\) An earlier work called *Eagles in a Ravine* (figure 5) by Hōgai has a similar combination of Japanese and Western techniques. The rocks in the painting are given dimensionality through the use of chiaroscuro. Okakura would later call Hōgai “the greatest living master of the age.”\(^71\) Both artists’ paintings are also characterized by their size, which is similar to the dimensions of European oil paintings despite being done with traditional materials like pigments on silk and ink on paper. *Kannon the Merciful Mother* is 77 x 34 inches and *Moonlit Landscape* measures 82.4 x 136.8 centimeters. This represented the change in how paintings audiences viewed painting in the Meiji. Before this, paintings were small in size, but with the adoption of public spaces where large audiences were expected the view them, paintings became bigger. The change can be seen in Shiba Kōkan’s 1783 *View at Mimeguri* (figure 6), which was done with ink and paper, but looks similar to a European oil painting. Shiba’s painting measured only 16 x 11 inches because it was created when paintings, Western-style or traditional, were intended for small private viewings. The change in size occurred in works by traditional artists as well. The style, traditional materials, and subject matter of Hōgai and Gahō’s

\(^{70}\) Foxwell, “*Merciful Mother Kannon* and its Audiences,” 332.

\(^{71}\) Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (London: John Murray, 1904), 230-31.
works was central to the painting ideology that Fenollosa and Okakura developed in the years between the founding of the Kangakai and the establishment of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts.

Fenollosa continued to develop the ideas presented in his speech to the Ryūchikai. It was also during this period that both scholars addressed prevalence of Western-style painters like Takahashi Yuichi and their role in the development of Japanese painting. In 1885, Fenollosa had begun discussing the importance of expressing national qualities through painting. On the world stage, other nations were looking for “national flavor” in art. This could never be achieved if Japanese artists continued to work in oil. Fenollosa viewed brushwork as the basis for all Japanese painting and superior in artistic merits. Thus, works in oil or other Western-style mediums were a detriment to the production of a national painting style.

Okakura began adding his own voice to the discussion of Japanese painting. At an 1887 speech to the Kangakai, he drew politically implicative lines between the four different choices of available for Japan now that distinction between fine arts and crafts was understood. The first two choices fell in line of the complete adoption of Western or traditional styles, while the third was equal support of both. The support of traditional styles, as espoused by the conservatives in the Ryūchikai, would mean the stagnation of the arts. The other option was to foster the full Westernization of art along with science, politics, and other areas. The fourth choice, the one preferred by Okakura and Fenollosa,

was to let art “naturally” develop. However, the use of “natural” must be carefully read in this case. Both Okakura and Fenollosa discussed the independent development of art, but they were also strong supporters of the official art school mentioned in Fenollosa’s 1882 speech to set aspiring painters on the correct artistic path. Okakura explained two main problems with the rhetoric of Western-style painting proponents. First, he cautioned the Kangakai that there is no singular “Western” style, and without complete understanding of the trends and schools, it would be folly to blindly adopt Western art simply because all things Western were synonymous with progress, and therefore better. Secondly, Okakura recognized the importance of the art export market and explained that adoption of Western style would negatively affect foreign markets because foreign connoisseurs looked for identifiably Japanese qualities. If Japan took on European styles, its art would lose its unique appeal. Okakura felt both of the first choices could only result in imitation either of Japan’s past masters or European ones because great art is something unique to a place, people, and society of a specific time. Adopting equal support for both implied a lack of confidence in the abilities of contemporary Japanese artists as well as the previous problems of choosing to support one. Therefore, Okakura believed only the natural development of art which “does not make any distinction between East and West… is the ground for the true principle of art.” Like Fenollosa, Okakura believed that great art was unique to the context it was produced and could not be recaptured afterwards. He defined art as “the expression of the highest and

74 Okakura, “A Lecture to the Painting Appreciation Society,” 73.
75 Okakura, “A Lecture to the Painting Appreciation Society,” 75-77.
76 Okakura, “A Lecture to the Painting Appreciation Society,” 78.
noblest of [Japanese] national culture,” and felt it was strongly tied to the history of the nation. They had each worked the idea that painting was part of Japanese identity into their ideology, and it is through this that sponsorship and affiliation with painting styles during the 1880s became a dichotomous choice between nihonga and yōga, which Okakura later described in The Ideals of the East as “artistic warfare.”

During the early 1880s, Western-style painting received mixed attention from the government and art societies. As discussed in chapter one, Italian painter Antonio Fontanesi was teaching Western-style painting techniques at the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō. He returned to Italy in 1878 due to illness. Many of his students, like Koyama Shōtarō, withdrew due to dissatisfaction with Fontanesi’s successor and formed the Jūichikai the same year. Unlike Kawakami Tōgai, the students of Fontanesi saw Western-style painting as viable style of artistic expression rather than a technical skill for military or scientific purpose. Takahashi Yuichi continued promote his belief that Western-style painting was the key to building Meiji identity through realistic paintings of important people and cultural accomplishments. In 1879, the government commissioned Yuichi to paint the Meiji Emperor’s portrait. The life-sized painting, which is often confused with a photograph, was done by Yuichi using a smaller oil painting by an Italian artist who based his painting off a photograph taken in 1873. Takahashi petitioned the government for more opportunities to paint key figures of the Meiji period, but was never granted permission. Doris Croissant attributes the lack of continued patronage to a combination of government reluctance to provide further sponsorship of Western painting outside of

77 Okakura, The Ideals of the East, 9.
78 Okakura, The Ideals of the East, 230.
79 Rosenfield, 200.
an academic setting and a stigma against using realistic portraiture outside of family Buddhist shrines.\textsuperscript{80} Yuichi took other steps to promote his idea of a Western Meiji painting style by publishing an art magazine beginning in 1880.\textsuperscript{81}

Koyama Shōtarō remained an active promoter of Western-style painting as well by challenging tradition aesthetics that frowned on realism. In 1882, he wrote an article for the magazine \textit{Tōyō Gakugei Zasshi} criticizing the fine art canonization of calligraphy at domestic exhibitions. The condemnation sparked a rebuttal from Okakura in the following issue of the same magazine, which argued calligraphy was the basis of Japanese and East Asian idealistic art.\textsuperscript{82} Despite Shōtarō, the institutional support of calligraphy remained strong during the 1880s, and was championed by Fenollosa as well as Okakura. They considered calligraphy related closely to the ink line, which was one of the foundations of Japanese art. By 1885, educational reform had resulted in brush and ink painting replacing the drawing system prepared by Kawakami and Takahashi in elementary schools.

In 1883, the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō closed due to lack of funds and a shift in general anxiety over the cultural damage due to the Westernization campaigns of the 1870s. The lack of funds was due to the cost of quelling the Satsuma Rebellion, and the shift in Westernization support was likely influenced by it as well.\textsuperscript{83} With the closure of the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō, only one painting school remained that offered instruction in Western techniques. The Kyōto-fu Gagakkō (the Kyoto Prefectural Painting School) was

\textsuperscript{80} In Japan, life-like portraits were associated with the Buddhist practice of placing the images in family memorial shrines. See Croissant, 155, 163.

\textsuperscript{81} Haga, 238-39.

\textsuperscript{82} Croissant, 165.

\textsuperscript{83} Haga, 250.
part of an effort to revive the artistic economy of Kyoto. It offered oil painting along with
*nanga*, Kanō, Shijō, and other traditional styles until it was closed in 1889. After the
closure of the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō, national sponsorship of Western-style painting had
come to an end. The attitude is reflected in the art exhibitions discussed earlier in this
chapter, which did not accept submissions that did not conform to a traditional painting
style, effectively excluding Western-style painters from showing their work in a
government sponsored exhibition. Advocates of Western-style painting lacked the
support of any art society with strong ties to government ministries as well. Painters like
Shōtarō, Yuichi, and Asai Chū remained active during the 1880s, but they were
marginalized from the center discourse that was dominated by the increasingly influential
supporters of *nihonga* and the conservative views of groups like the Ryūchikai.

As part of the goal to increase the popular exposure to Japanese art and promote
art history, the government began a preservation campaign for historic relics in the 1880s.
It began a system of cataloguing art relics in temples around the country in an attempt to
prevent the outflow of historical pieces of art that were being sold to foreign collectors by
many temples following the Meiji Restoration. As a recognized expert on Japanese art
history, Fenollosa was added to the annual tours by government officials inspecting the
storehouses of temples. Though this and his work through the Kangakai and other art
groups, Fenollosa continued work for various government ministries.

In 1886, the Meiji government acquiesced to the calls for establishment of an
official state art institute under the Ministry of Education. Fenollosa, Okakura, and
Hamao Arata (1849-1925) were appointed to year-long commission responsible for

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84 Weston, 52-53.
85 *The Japan Weekly Mail*, July 17, 1886.
touring European art schools in order to determine the best possible system to be used for the government school. The reaction to the news in *The Japan Weekly Mail* suggests that the purpose of the fact-finding mission was focused on industrial art programs. In an article, it discusses the vacuum of financial support for the industrial arts caused by the Restoration. The traditional system of artisans working for a patron had been removed, but there was not a fixed venue to allow the artisans to interact with the new foreign clientele or “great schools of national thought.” The article hoped that through Fenollosa’s understanding of Japanese art history he would select the most appropriate system of education for the encouragement of the Japanese art industry.\(^{86}\) Despite the goals of Fenollosa and Okakura’s call for development of *nihonga*, the government seemed to have been more concerned with the implications the school would have on industrial art and foreign exports.

The Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō (Tokyo School of Fine Arts) opened in February of 1889. Okakura and Hamo were placed in administrative positions while Fenollosa was a professor of art history. As a government sponsored art institution, the selection of faculty and curriculum was a powerful tool for conferring prestige on specific schools and practitioners. The responsibility of these tasks was left to Fenollosa and Okakura. Ideologically, the purpose of the school was to promote “pure design,” the notion that painting should come from the mind of the individual artist and be executed in a way that is not concerned with physical veracity.\(^{87}\) This was a combination of Fenollosa and Okakura’s notion of artistic ideal that was rooted in the tradition of painting subjects from memory rather than life. Instruction included the subjects, techniques, and materials of

\(^{86}\) *The Japan Weekly Mail*, October 2, 1886.  
\(^{87}\) Michele, Marra, 70.
select traditional styles, along with limited introduction of Western techniques. The aspects of Western art that Okakura intended for use by the schools painters were limited to realistic anatomy and perspective.  

With Okakura in administrative control of the school under the supervision of Kuki and the Ministry of Education, the school was a place of ideological as well as technical training for the first class of artists. Okakura envisioned nihonga as “national art” that was “a higher realization of the possibilities of ancient Japanese.” To oversee the instruction of students, Hashimoto Gahō and Kanō Hōgai were appointed as professors of painting. Hōgai passed away before he could assume his new role, but Kanō Tomonobu, who had close ties with Fenollosa and was a member of the same branch of the Kanō School, replaced him.  

At the time the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō was established, painters were active in Kanō, Tosa, nanga, Shijō, yōga, and ukiyoe styles. The selection of what styles would be incorporated into the school was important. Kanō was selected as the main style, as emphasized by the faculty selection, because of its roots in the Chinese painting style practiced in the Ashikaga (1337-1573) and Nara (710-794) periods. Okakura believed the art of both periods was strongly connected to the formation of Eastern idealism and were the periods when Japanese art was its most national. The Nara period was important because its art represented “the purest ideal from the first Northern development of Buddhism…making form and formalistic beauty the foundation of artistic excellence.” Okakura credited the Ashikaga with the fusion of Buddhism and Neo-Confucian thought.

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in art.\textsuperscript{90} The strong influences of Buddhism during these periods of art connected Japan to an artistic tradition that was rooted in ancient India and represented throughout Asia via Buddhism. Because of this, Okakura and Fenollosa believed that a Kanō-based style of painting was both national and historical.

\textit{Yōga} and \textit{ukiyo\-e} were excluded from the school’s curriculum. The school sought to create a national style of painting, and \textit{yōga} Western orientation and disconnectedness with Eastern idealism meant there was no room for it in Okakura and Fenollosa’s ideology. Regarding \textit{ukiyo\-e}, Okakura acknowledged the achievements in color and drawing by the painters, but felt that it lacked the “embodiment of the national fervor, in which all true art exists.” Additionally, thought it was popular with foreigners because it was visually pleasing, it was creating an undesired impression of Japanese art through association with the Tokugawa period in the international community.\textsuperscript{91} Okakura was not alone in his views on \textit{ukiyo\-e}. For many Meiji thinkers, \textit{ukiyo\-e}’s popularity with foreigners along with its sometimes satirical or vulgar content was creating an image of Japan at odds with the government’s attempts to disassociate Meiji society with the urban culture of the late Tokugawa period.\textsuperscript{92} The subject matter of \textit{shunga} prints (pictures of erotic subject matter) was well known in Europe. Beginning in the late Edo period, travelogues cautioned readers to avoid the “indecencies” found in certain prints.\textsuperscript{93} The sexuality and wide availability of \textit{shunga} went against the public moral standards that were imported from Europe during the Meiji period. \textit{Shunga} and \textit{ukiyo\-e} were strongly

\textsuperscript{90} Okakura, \textit{The Ideals of the East}, 164-66.
\textsuperscript{91} Okakura, \textit{The Ideals of the East}, 198-99.
\textsuperscript{92} Foxwell, “\textit{Dekadansu},” 36.
connected to Edo urban culture both domestically and abroad, therefore a detriment to reshaping the image of Meiji Japan. By encouraging painting centered on styles and themes suggestive of the distant past and Buddhism, Okakura was connecting Meiji national painting with a created “classical” period of Japanese history analogous to the Greek and Roman influences in European art.

Okakura, Fenollosa, Kuki others from the Kangakai spread their ideology outside the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō through the art magazine Kokka (“Flower of the Nation,” 國華). The first issue of Kokka was published in October 1889, and it contained a statement edifying the goals of the magazine’s contributors. In addition to the core group from the Kangakai, William Sturgis Bigelow (1850-1926), a well-known American collector of Japanese art, and contemporary painters contributed articles to the magazine. In the Kokka’s statement of purpose, it explained that since the end of tradition means of art patronage, Japanese art production has been thrown into period where foreign tastes rather than independent development of the artist drives trends. As result, there has been no emergence of national art since the Meiji Restoration. The Kokka hoped to remedy this by promoting historic art preservation and education through its articles and reproductions. Regarding nihonga, the Kokka sought to encourage the individual development of artists so they might create works depicting historical subjects that connected Japan’s past to its modern present. It blamed three causes for the shift in Japanese art away from historical national works to common scenes of everyday life. The first cause was the division of Japan under the feudal system that prevented the forming of national ideas. Secondly, the Tokugawa government’s policy of international isolation prevented the formation of national identity as reaction to a foreign presence. Finally,
certain esoteric influences of Buddhism were blamed encouraging the preference for overly abstract subject matter in art. To counter this, *Kokka* hoped to rekindle the popularity of historical motifs in painting. Other articles included in the first volume were a history of *ukiyo* and discussion of art philosophy by Fenollosa and biographies of famous painters by Okakura, including one of Kanō Hōgai.\(^94\)

With *Kokka* as their mouthpiece and Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō firmly in its control, Okakura and Fenollosa had firm control over the ideological instruction of painters and art aficionados going into the 1890s. Yōga was excluded from official institutions and domestic exhibitions. However, painting conservatives from the Ryūchikai expressed anxiety over the institutional control of the *nihonga* supporters. In 1887, they reorganized to form the Nihon Bijutsu Kai (Japanese Art Association), which was connected to the Imperial household and conferred titles on distinguished artists.\(^95\) Through this it was able to counter some of the prestige given to the progressive *nihonga* painters employed at the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, which was set to become the new national painting style.

\(^94\) *Kokka*’s founding statement of purpose is summarized in English in *The Japan Weekly Mail*, March 8, 1890.

\(^95\) Satō, 41.
Chapter 3: The World’s Columbia Exhibition and Yōga’s Re-institutionalization in the 1890s

During the 1890s, two developments in Meiji painting history characterized the international and domestic changes in art perception and institutions. Four years after its opening, the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō’s faculty and upper-level students debuted at the World’s Columbian Exposition of Chicago in 1893. Japanese nihonga and traditional painters were exhibited in the fine arts hall and a specially built pavilion based on the Byōdōin in Kyoto. This was the first time Japan had presented its own synthesized version of its art history alongside the works of contemporary painters. The debut of Okakura and the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō occurred during a period when there was an increasing number published works on Japanese art by foreign scholars. Many of these authors were self-taught or were basing their understandings on European collections combined with visits to Japan. Without an authoritative work on Japanese art or aesthetics available in a foreign language, these writers became know outside Japan as authorities on Japanese art. The independent assessments of Japanese art and its history by foreigners had an impact on the reception of nihonga at the international level. As a result, the governmental patronage of painting shifted in the second half of the 1890s bringing yōga back into government-run art schools and the competitive field of painting ideology.

During the first decades of the Meiji period, Japan was not playing a significant role in the formation of its artistic identity in the international community. A small number of English language texts on Japanese art had appeared during the 1870s, and in
the following decade several books written by well-known academics within European art circles were published. The first was Christopher Dresser’s (1834-1904) *Japan, Its Architecture, Art, and Art Manufactures* in 1882. Dresser was a prominent British designer and major figure in the Anglo-Japanese style movement. His book was based on a four-month tour of Japan between 1876 and 1877.

During the trip, he was exposed to a wide variety of Japanese art, and Dresser used his observations and discussions with the people he met as the basis for the book. Included in his commentary was a trip to the Imperial Storehouse in Nara and a personal display of painting by a female painter Dresser said had painted for the Emperor.96 Despite this, Dresser does not include names of artists or schools in the text, probably due to his lack of formal knowledge of Japanese art. Of the paintings he viewed, Dresser gave the most praise to the paintings that exhibited realism. He wrote that the greatest merit of Japanese art is “the expression of life with which they endow their delineations of plants, birds, insects, and fishes.” Not only were these paintings highly realistic, but also Dresser felt that they exhibited a unique ability to convey life in painting and were distinctly “Japanese.”97 Based on the reference to subject matter, it is likely that Dresser was discussing the Shijō or similar paintings. Like with earlier observations made by Europeans, Dresser’s aesthetic preference favored the photorealism that was valued in European academic painting. However, Dresser’s final verdict on the artistic value of Japanese painting was not high. Dresser is critical of certain characteristics of Japanese painting that were valued within Japanese aesthetics, such as the use of negative space in

97 Dresser, 316-18.
the composition. Paintings with that quality, he felt, were “unfinished” rather than employing an accepted technique. He believed that Japan “knows no art similar to that by which we produce our great pictures.” The best of Japanese painting could only be considered “perfect sketches.”

Based on the comments made by Dresser, he had no formal knowledge of Japanese painting or art history, and he was simply recording his initial reactions based on his European artistic background. Yet, his notoriety in Europe likely provided this book with considerable authority on the subject.

The following year, *L’art Japonais* by Louis Gonse, a French art critic, was published. The book was later translated into English in 1891. Gonse, himself, had not been to Japan, but was educated in Japanese art through the assistance of Wakai Kenzaburō, a Japanese art importer who had been active in Paris *japonisme* circles since the 1878 exhibition. The prominence of Gonse garnered the attention of Fenollosa who gave the book’s section on painting a mixed review, stating that it contained many historical errors regarding art history, but “merits the world’s serious consideration” as the first book by an educated art critic who acknowledged the artistic value of Japanese art.

Fenollosa’s main contention with Gonse lay with his incomplete understanding of Japanese aesthetics, which resulted in Gonse contributing to the “Hokusai-crowned pagoda of generalizations” found in commentaries on Japanese art. Gonse praised the work of Hokusai, but commented that he was not well received in Japan due to the vulgarity of subject matter associated with *ukiyo*. However, Fenollosa stated that the

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98 Dresser, 319.
“vulgarity” of Hokusai referred, not to subject matter, but to his unrefined style of painting unlike the works of the Kanō School.\textsuperscript{101} He also condemned Gonse’s praise of Kikuchi Yōsai, one of the few contemporary artists mentioned. Again, Fenollosa believed Gonse misplaced his approval for one of “the coldest and most repulsively materialistic of all modern Japanese artists.”\textsuperscript{102} The review shows similar trends in appraisal of Japanese art by European scholars. Facsimiles of ukiyoe were published in Europe as early as 1859 and were presented as something worthy of artistic consideration.\textsuperscript{103} Gonse ranked Japanese painters based on his own aesthetic experience, which in this case was japonisme. Since 1856, prints by Hokusai and others were circulating in Europe. Art dealers in Paris especially emphasized mass produced print albums of ukiyoe artists, which appealed to buyers for their “commonness” and “popular imagery.”\textsuperscript{104}

William Anderson’s \textit{The Pictorial Arts of Japan} was published in 1886. Like the work of Gonse, Anderson provided a detailed account of Japanese art history with references to specific styles and schools. Anderson evaluated several major branches of Japanese painting including the Kanō. But, Anderson, like Dresser, placed significant emphasis on the Shijō, or “Naturalist,” School, which he believed to be distinctly Japanese.\textsuperscript{105} He assessed that Japanese painters were skilled in the interpretation of animals, color, and brushwork, but failed in lighting, perspective, and correct anatomy of

\textsuperscript{101} Fenollosa, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{102} Fenollosa, 52.
\textsuperscript{103} Watanabe Toshio, 672.
\textsuperscript{105} William Anderson, \textit{The Pictorial Arts of Japan, with a Brief Historical Sketch of the Associated Arts and Some Remarks upon Pictorial Art of the Chinese & Koreans} (London: Sampson, Lawn, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1886), 86.
human figures. Additionally, Anderson was drawn to the works of Hokusai like many other Europeans at the time. He praised the uniqueness of the painter’s skill and believed Hokusai to be “true Japanese.” This comment and high praise is significant because it is instructing European readers how to view Japanese painting in regards to national characteristics independent of a Japanese authority.

Anderson’s book is also useful because he reviews current trends in Japanese painting. In the previous two books discussed, there was not much attention to the contemporary developments in Japanese painting. In the first section of the book, Anderson states that many schools like the Tosa and Kanō had fallen into “decadence” since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, roughly the around the beginning of the Tokugawa period. In recent years, Anderson said that there was not much representation of traditional Japan arts, and commented negatively on the emergence of Western-style painters in Japan giving Europeans an incorrect notion of Japanese art.

The artistic preferences of the mentioned works are interesting because it is somewhat consistence with the sample of paintings displayed at the Centennial Exhibition. The paintings selected by the commission were primarily from artists who specialized in kachōga or traditional landscapes, and they were identified as being representative of Japanese national character. The reaction of Dresser and Anderson suggests that some of the Meiji government’s promotion of contemporary painters of traditional styles had found its way into the artistic preferences of European and American enthusiasts of Japanese art, which seems to have mixed with existing preference towards realism in art.

106 Anderson, 91-92.
107 Anderson, 97.
109 Anderson, 102-03, 105.
At the same time, the efforts of 1870s art promotion seem to have been partially a failure due to the high degree of preference towards certain *ukiyo-e* artists like Hokusai amongst the *japonists*. Western predispositions towards Japanese painting had an impact on how contemporary painters were received on the international stage.

Four years after the opening of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, Japan participated in the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Gōzō Tateno (1841-1907), the Japanese minister to the United States, emphasized that Japan had made extensive preparations in order to prove it was culturally equal to the modern nations of the world. Japan hoped that a successful display would help convince America and European powers to dissolve the unequal treaties that were undermining Japanese advancements under the Meiji government. The preparations for the fair began three years prior when the Imperial Diet approved the budget, which was followed by the appointment of the commission the next year. The combined weight of goods and supplies Japan shipped to Chicago was one thousand tons, almost three times the amount sent to Philadelphia in 1876 and Paris in 1876 and 1889. However, Japan did not wish to send a message that it was completely westernized. Much of the preparations made were for the construction of Japanese architecture and décor meant to highlight Japan’s identity as an Eastern nation. This included the presentation of Japanese painting. First, Japan erected a replica of the Byōdōin’s Hōōden (Phoenix Hall) on the fair grounds, and secondly, contemporary Japanese artists were the only Asian nation represented in the fine arts section. In both cases, Japanese painting at Chicago was meant to display a newly synthesized Meiji national identity.

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111 Gōzō, 37-38.
The Hōōden was perhaps Japan’s most noticeable contribution to the Columbian Exposition. It consisted of a central hall and two adjacent wings that were decorated in styles representing specific periods of Japanese art history. The task of decoration each portion was given to the instructors and senior students of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō and painters from the Kyōto-fu Gagakkō under the supervision of Okakura and the Imperial Museum. Fenollosa represented Japan as a jury for the fine arts committee, but he had left Japan in 1890 so it is likely his involvement in the Hōōden was minimal. The central hall represented the Tokugawa period, and it was adorned with paintings by Hashimoto Gahō and Kanō Tomonobu. In the left wing, the decorations were based on the original Hōōden and Imperial Palace at Kyoto in order to represent the Fujiwara period. It included five paintings by Kose Shōseki (1843-1919), a Kyoto painter from the Kose School who was versed in nanga. The right wing represented the Ashikaga period. It was based on a portion of the Ginkakuji in Kyoto. It was decorated with hanging scrolls and panels painted by Kawabata Gyokushō (1842-1913), a Shijō painter who was prolific in the Kyoto design industry. There were also several paintings from past masters including a replica of Kose Kanaoka’s (ca. 800) Nachi Waterfall.\textsuperscript{112} Okakura felt that since Vienna, foreigners had not been able to grasp Japanese painting as shown by their preference for landscapes and kachōga. Therefore, the goal for Chicago was to showcase historical paintings that were complex, but not beyond the grasp of the foreign audiences.\textsuperscript{113} The presentation of the Hōōden was designed to showcase a created tradition of Japanese art that extended from painters like Kose Kanaoka in the ninth century to active

\textsuperscript{113} Conant, “Japan “Abroad” at the Chicago Exposition, 1893,” 269.
contemporary painters. More importantly, certain styles like *nanga* and *ukiyo-e* were excluded from the Hōōden.

As the only Asian nation represented in the art palace, the Japanese display would be an important factor in demonstrating the Meiji government’s artistic heritage on the world stage alongside the fine art selections of European powers. The works displayed were promised by Gozo to be the “best and most truly representative specimens of Japanese art.”

Organizers of the Art Palace gave special consideration to the works from Japan. Rather than separate them by medium, Japan’s selections were intermixed in order “secure the best artistic effect” owing to the unique nature of Japanese art. The works Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō included *nihonga* painters Hashimoto Gahō’s *A Landscape in Misty Atmosphere*, Kanō Tomonobu’s *Heichi Battle*, and Kose Shōseki’s *A Great Japanese Teacher – Shotok[u]taishi*. However, Okakura and *nihonga* supporters did not have total control over the remainder of works shown in the fine arts section. Based on the artists and titles of the paintings listed, the majority of the selections for the fine arts section were painters from traditional schools, specifically *kachōga* and landscape painters, while *yōga* was only represented by two submissions from one painter. This shows a significant preference for traditional works by the selection committee and

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114 Gōzō, 40.
115 Department of Fine Arts, World’s Columbian Exposition, Revised Catalogue, Department of Fine Arts with Index of Exhibitors (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1893), 384.
116 In the Revised Catalogue, only “Andō Chiutato” is listed as having submitted paintings in oil. However, Conant says Kobayashi Mango was also represented along with three oil painters in the Women’s Building. Conant, “Japan “Abroad” at the Chicago Exposition, 1893,” 268-69, and see Appendix B for painters exhibited at the Art Palace in Chicago.
represents a conservative approach to presenting the progressive painting ideology espoused by Okakura and Fenollosa.

The distribution of painting awards at Chicago reflected the aesthetics of those like Dresser and Anderson who preferred realistic paintings of animals and plants. Painting that received awards were Noguchi Yūkoku’s (1827-98) *A Group of Carp, with Water Weeds*. Yūkoku was a member of the Nihon Bijutsu Kyōkai and noted *nanga* painter who specialized in *kachōga*. Takeuchi Seihō (1864-1942), an instructor at the Kyōto-shi Gagakkō, also won an award for his painting listed as *A Landscape*. Of the listed winners in the *Revised Catalogue* from the fair, only Taniguchi Kōkyō’s (1864-1915) *A Cherry Blossom Picnic in the Middle Ages* has a title that is suggestive of a historical painting. The remaining works have titles that indicate they are either landscapes or *kachōga* from painters who were predominately from Kyoto. Kawabata Gyokusō was the only faculty member of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō who received an award for his painting titled *A Toy Seller*. Samples of works from both the Tokyo and Kyoto schools were also exhibited in by the Department of Education. The artists are not listed, but the paintings titles from the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō suggest that many of the pieces were not *nihonga* as described by Okakura either. Titles like *Figures under a Pine-tree, after Masanobu* suggest anachronistic paintings style after the works of past masters. While others have “from nature” in the title, such as *A Cock, from nature*. Francis Brinkley (1841-1912), an Irish born resident of Tokyo who worked as a military

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117 Roberts, 207, 171.
118 For a list of award recipients see Appendix A.
advisor and later published several books on Japan, praised the works by painters like Araki Kampo (1831-1915) and Taki Katei (1830-1901), who were both represented by their kachōga paintings. Okakura had dismissed these same painters as traditionalists, despite Kampo being a faculty member of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō. While Brinkley commented that the Meiji painters might give audiences an incorrect notion of Japanese painting.\(^\text{120}\)

*Nihonga* failed to make the definitive reception that had been hoped for prior to the Exposition. This is likely due to the reception of *nihonga* relying on foreign understanding of Fenollosa and Okakura’s notion of Eastern art as essentially idealist compared to Western art’s realism. An article in *The Burlington Magazine* later described the paradox facing the reception of Japanese and East Asian painting. The author commented that the assumption of a classically educated audience was negatively affecting the reception of Japanese and Chinese paintings. On the other hand, the article explained “the European [painter] expects nothing from his audience; he knows it to be too indifferent if not actually too stupid to understand his meaning without a complete explanation.”\(^\text{121}\) The article was referring to the use of realism as a tool to lead an untrained audience through the meaning of a painting compared to use of symbolism by Japanese and Chinese painters to convey meaning to an audience that was assumed to share the same literary knowledge. As shown by the awards and critical response at Chicago, the realism perceived in Japanese painting was praised because it was an understandable and familiar aesthetic quality. In other words, *nihonga* required that the

\(^{120}\) Conant, “Japan “Abroad” at the Chicago Exposition, 1893,” 269-70.

international art community be educated in Japanese and Eastern aesthetics, yet there had not been any scholarly work, other than Gonse’s book, that tried to explain Eastern painting theory and place Japanese art on the same level of European fine arts.

In the absence of an authoritative work on Japanese art history, the Hōōden served as an educational museum for the international community at Chicago. By highlighting specific periods in Japanese history, Okakura was able to present an edited history of Japanese art that also could also instruct audiences on traditional Japanese aesthetic values in painting through the types of works displayed. The inclusion was partially a response to the harsh criticism of Brinkley at the Third Domestic Industrial Exhibition in Tokyo. He criticized the lack of classifications or timelines at the Domestic Exhibition because it made it difficult for foreign audiences to judge the works.122 Although the Hōōden was popularly received, this may have been for its “Oriental” novelty rather than fine arts aestheticism. Especially among the American fairgoers who praised the displays of traditional Japan as against the similar works of so many European influenced nations.123 The goal of Gōzō Tateno was partially realized. Americans celebrated the uniqueness of Japan and its arts as an alternative to the industrialized nations of the West. However, it was the more conservative painting ideology espoused by those who preferred the traditional modes of Japanese painting compared to Okakura and Fenollosa’s neo-traditional style that enjoyed success. Likely, the lack of a consolidated presentation was due to the transference of the exposition committee from the Ministry of

122 Conant, “Japan “Abroad” at the Chicago Exposition, 1893,” 262.
123 For a detailed account of American reactions to Japan’s exhibits, see Harris, 41-44.
Education, which favored Okakura, to the Ministry of Agriculture and Industry under Mutsu Munemitsu (1844-1897),\textsuperscript{124} which had favored a conservative painting ideology. The near absence of yōga artists from the World’s Columbian Exposition was result of the shift in government policy towards Westernization during the early 1880s. In the following years, Western-style painting was excluded from art exhibitions and government institutions like the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō. Officially, yōga’s presence was minimal due to the “technical immaturity” of the style.\textsuperscript{125} However, this only reflects the ideology at the top levels of the Meiji government. During the 1880s several important painters and intellectuals who had received educations in European universities began returning to Japan. They learned European art theory first hand and were convinced that a distinct Japanese style could be developed that would make yōga a nationally representative painting style. In place of official patronage, they opened private ateliers and spread their ideology through new art societies bolstering the presence of earlier yōga painters like Asai Chū, Koyama Shōtarō, and Takahashi Yuichi. By the end of the 1880s, just as the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō opened, yōga painters had regained prominence at domestic exhibitions and art critics debated yōga’s role as a national painting ideology.

German-trained oil painter Harada Naojirō (1862-1922) returned to Japan in 1887. Before going to Germany, Harada had trained under Takahashi at his art school Tenkai Gakusha. In 1884, Harada left for Munich where he spent the next three years training under Gabriel Max (1840-1915). Upon returning to Tokyo, he opened his own art school.\textsuperscript{126} The following year, Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) returned from Munich as well.

\textsuperscript{124} Conant, “Japan “Abroad” at the Chicago Exposition, 1893,” 258-59.  
\textsuperscript{125} Croissant, 166.  
\textsuperscript{126} Roberts, 39.
A towering figure in Meiji literature, Ōgai was a student of Nishi Amane and had become close friends with Harada during his time in Germany. He was an important supporter of Naojirō and yōga as the means to create an internationally recognizable Japanese art. Ōgai contributed translations of German works aesthetic theory adding to the growing body of translated material from Europe. Aesthetic theory was still developing, and at the time, it was considered a part of philosophy for the evaluation of fine arts. Only after the appointment of a professor of aesthetics did it become a field of its own in 1900. The increased prevalence of European aesthetics in Japan formed a basis for art criticism and evaluation that carried implications of superiority of European modes of art. The discussion of European aesthetics combined with yōga support beginning in 1890 and continuing for the rest of the decade.

Many students from the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō had remained active since its closure in 1883, including Koyama Shōtarō who had criticized the canonization of calligraphy as a fine art. In 1889, Shōtarō and Asai Chū helped found the Meiji Bijutsukai (Meiji Fine Art Society). Chū’s statement at the founding explained, “This group assembles those who have studied Western art…displays the Meiji philosophy and hopes to be of benefit to the nation.” In the founding statement for the group, it asked why it was that only art in Japan remained conservative while so many other aspects of society were adopting European influences. By December of its founding year, the membership consisted of artists, prominent professors from the Imperial University, and government officials.

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128 Michele Marra, 93.
129 Quoted in Yamanashi, 31.
Hiromoto Watanabe, the director of the Imperial University, was the first president of the group.\textsuperscript{131}

A professor of music at the University commented on the conservatism in Japanese art at a meeting of the Meiji Bijutsukai. He believed that it was the geography of Japan was constantly changing due to its volcanic nature, and so to must the art of the country change with it. Josiah Conder (1852-1920), the well-known British architect who had designed the Rokumeikan in 1883 and other Western-style buildings in Tokyo, also supported the new society. Conder had been critical of Meiji society’s support for traditional arts for many years. In 1886, he blamed conservatism in art on the irrational fear that studying Western techniques would lead to the loss of Japanese nationality. He believed that both Europe and Japan should borrow from each other, or Japan would “condemn her art to decrepitude and decay.”\textsuperscript{132} To the Meiji Bijutsukai, Conder said that Japanese art was decorative because it was “governed strictly by laws which control their colouring [sic], grouping, and composition” meant to ensure its purpose of decoration. Conder explained that fine art was free from these regulations. For painting, Conder said that scientific realism was linked to fine arts, and intentional ignorance of realism in painting made traditional Japanese styles “imperfect.” But he also cautioned that the motives of yōga painters must remain Japanese in order to ensure national identity within the laws of Western-style painting.\textsuperscript{133} Conder’s speech connected the definition of fine art with Western-style painting, and he reconciled the earlier concerns.

\textsuperscript{131} The Japan Times Weekly Mail, December 14, 1889.
\textsuperscript{132} The Japan Times Weekly Mail, August 28, 1886.
\textsuperscript{133} The Japan Times Weekly Mail, December 14, 1889.
of national identity through painting that was part of the shift towards traditional painting during the early 1880s.

The Meiji Bijutsukai encouraged *yōga* regular exhibitions in Tokyo beginning in 1889 and the publication of its own art periodical. However, *yōga* supporters did not share a singular ideology. The reactions to the paintings at the Meiji Bijutsu Kai’s first exhibition show the contested ideas within *yōga* circles. Naojirō debuted his oil painting *Kannon Riding a Dragon*. The painting depicted the Bodhisattva Kannon standing tranquilly atop a dragon against a dark background of misty cliffs and the ocean according to European notions of scientific realism. The fantastic imagery pulled from Buddhist mythology sparked a heated debate between Ōgai and Toyama Shōichi (1848-1900) over the appropriate subject matter of such paintings.

Toyama had been educated in America and was a leading intellectual in art circles. His lecture “The Future of Japanese painting” described the contention between *nihonga* and *yōga* supporters. As a proponent of the later, he agreed that *yōga* was superior in technical aspects and photographic representation of reality. However, Toyama felt that *yōga* was still limited by traditional Japanese subject matter, namely nature and religious motifs like *Kannon Riding a Dragon*. Toyama said using life studies to produce wholly imaginary subjects was flawed. Additionally, he believed nature and religious paintings were not reflective of the current times, but representative of the past and not Meiji identity. In a direct rebuttal, Ōgai argued that Toyama was incorrect because all paintings were first filtered through the artist’s imagination. He contended that art criticism should only be concerned with the technical execution of the painting
and its medium.\textsuperscript{134} While, the supporters of \textit{yōga} agreed that the medium was the preferred choice for creating a Japanese national painting, this argument shows that the choice of appropriate subject matter was not unanimous. The debate of subject matter had partially caused the minimal presence of \textit{yōga} at Chicago. Japanese officials had been concerned about whether or not \textit{yōga} could be recognized as Japanese, and contributed to many painters refusing to participate.\textsuperscript{135}

The need to create history paintings was not limited to \textit{yōga} circles. As discussed in the previous chapter, Fenollosa and Okakura encouraged works of historical subjects in their rhetoric. Ōmori Korenaka (1844-1908) echoed this belief in “A New Explanation of Art”. He saw that history painting was considered the highest form of art in Europe, but the subject matter of \textit{kachōga} and landscapes did not fit with the definition of history painting. Naojirō had similar beliefs, but defended his choice of subject matter saying that at Munich he had observed wars, myth, and poetry were all acceptable sources for history painting.\textsuperscript{136} At the end of the 1880s, it was noted in the newspapers that \textit{nihonga} and \textit{yōga} supporters were treating each other “like political opponents and tear each others’ opinions to pieces.”\textsuperscript{137} Only the conservative circles like the Ryūchikai were not pushing for the support of history painting in Japan.

The revived support of \textit{yōga} resulted in a significant amount of oil paintings being submitted to the competition for history paintings at the Third Domestic Industrial

\textsuperscript{134} Mori Ōgai, selections from “Refuting the Art Theories of Mr. Toyama Shōichi,” trans. Hirayama Mikiko, in \textit{Not a Song Like Any Other: an Anthology of Writings by Mori Ōgai}, ed., J. Thomas Rimer (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2004), 107-119.

\textsuperscript{135} Murakami, 48.


\textsuperscript{137} \textit{The Japan Weekly Mail}, March 16, 1890.
Exposition in 1890. The winners in this category were largely oil paintings of Japanese historical subject matter like Naojirō’s *Kannon Riding a Dragon*. Even Okakura commented that oil paintings were showing improvement.\(^{138}\) However, the use of Japanese subject matter in oil painting did not affect the views of the organizers for the Chicago exhibition as shown by the near absence of *yōga* artists in the fine art section. The Columbian Exposition committee advised members of the Meiji Bijutsukai against participating, resulting in many *yōga* painters boycotting participation at Chicago.\(^{139}\) The result was Japan being significantly represented at the Exposition by traditional painters, and *yōga* remained without a place in the curriculum of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō. In place of participation at Chicago, the Meiji Bijutsukai held another exhibition. Separately, Takahashi Yuichi organized another exhibit in Tokyo focused on the history of Western-style painting in Japan, which included works by Shiba Kōkan and Antonio Fontanesi. However, Yuichi was not connected to the other *yōga* who played parts in the promotion of their ideology during the 1890s.\(^{140}\)

*Yōga* gained new supporters when a second wave of European trained painters returned to Japan in the early 1890s. Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924) returned from a nine-year stay in Paris in 1893. Originally sent to study law, Kuroda took an interest in painting and became a student of Raphaël Collin (1850-1915). In Paris, Kuroda met Kume Keiichirō (1866-1934), who was also a student of Collin and had originally begun painting under a pupil of Fontanesi. Collin was an academic painter, but had connections to Impressionism and was an advocate of *en plein air* (painting in open air). As result Kuroda and Kume’s

\(^{138}\) Takashina, 57.  
\(^{139}\) Uyeno, 34.  
\(^{140}\) Haga, 229, 256.
instruction favored a “progressive impressionist style of light expression and the use of purples to create shading effects” as opposed to the darker color palette used by the many members of the Meiji Bijutsu who had trained under Fontanesi.\(^{141}\) When Kuroda and Kume returned from France, they founded a private art school in Tokyo.

While still in Paris, Kuroda’s was already being shown by the Meiji Bijutsukai in Tokyo. His oil painting *Reading* debuted in 1981 at a Meiji Bijutsukai exhibition.\(^{142}\) However, Kuroda rocketed to painting notoriety several years later due to the controversy over a painting of a nude woman shown at the 1895 Fourth National Industrial Exhibition in Kyoto. The painting titled *Morning Toilette* was a life-sized depiction of a nude French woman arranging her hair before a mirror. Before Kyoto, it was shown in Paris in 1893, and the Meiji Bijutsukai exhibited it in Tokyo the following year without creating controversy. Alice Tseng attributes the strong public response to the combination of a government sponsored exhibition, Kyoto’s association as the traditional center of Japanese art and Kuroda’s work as *yōga*.\(^{143}\)

The painting section at the Fourth National Industrial Exhibition received a lukewarm review in *The Japan Weekly Mail*. The works by *nihonga* artists were criticized for straying further from traditional source material, while *yōga* painters were showing technical improvement, but still lagging behind their European and American counterparts. Regarding the traditional schools, there were a small number of good paintings.\(^{144}\) The judges for the painting section were similarly without high praise. The highest prize given to a painting was a bronze medal awarded to Hashimoto Gahō,

\(^{141}\) Yamanashi, 33.
\(^{142}\) Tseng, 427.
\(^{143}\) Tseng, 417.
\(^{144}\) *The Japan Weekly Mail*, June 8, 1895
signifying the “dexterous execution” of the painting, while decorative pieces in other sections received most of the awards.\textsuperscript{145}

However, the public reaction to Kuroda’s \textit{Morning Toilette} compensated for the lack of awards. \textit{The Japan Weekly Mail} stated that the painting had “naturally provoked an outburst of protest.” The article attributes the reaction to the lack of nude figures in traditional Japanese art outside of \textit{ukiyo\-e}, as nudity was associated with physical toil rather than “the noble and gentle.” It was harshly critical of Kuroda’s work from a technical perspective as well, calling it a “parody” of a motif popular in Europe.\textsuperscript{146} However, the strong public response was because of a larger shift in disassociation “uncivilized” aspects of Edo society and culture in order to portray Japan as a civilized nation for the sake of reversing the Unequal Treaties. Included in this was the nude in the pictorial arts, which had been associated with \textit{shunga} prints during the Edo Period.\textsuperscript{147} The nudity itself was not considered obscene according to \textit{The Japan Weekly Mail}. The main problem was whether or not the painting fulfilled a social function, as it was believed fine arts should. Kuki Ryūichi defended the presentation of Kuroda’s painting for commercial reasons, as the painting had sold for a higher amount that Gahô’s \textit{nihonga} with a Buddhist subject.\textsuperscript{148} Regardless of the public’s opinion of the place of nudity within Japanese fine art, the notoriety certainly increased public awareness of \textit{yōga}.

Following the Fourth National Industrial Exhibition, Kuroda and Kume formed a new art society called the Hakubakai (White Horse Society) in 1896. The group favored the influences of Collin, and they were known as the \textit{murasaki\-ha} (purple school) for

\textsuperscript{145} Tseng, 429-30.
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{The Japan Weekly Mail}, June 1, 1895.
\textsuperscript{147} Foxwell, “Dekadansu,” 36.
\textsuperscript{148} Tseng, 431, 436.
their use of lighter purple shading compared to the darker palette of the Barbizon
influenced painters from the Meiji Bijutsukai. Kuroda also believed that painting should be “the allegorical expression of abstract concepts.” His *Wisdom, Impression, Sentiment* in 1899 is an example of this principle. The painting depicts three nude Japanese women in different poses to invoke the ideas in the title.¹⁴⁹ Ōgai was critical of this painting too. He said that the nude had no precedent in Japanese art, and it was absurd to use Japanese women in a Greek motif.¹⁵⁰ Despite the continued resistance to Kuroda’s use of the nude, the Hakubakai held painting exhibitions nearly annually until it was disbanded in 1911.¹⁵¹

The success of the new group of yōga painters was evident when a new round of
faculty was appointed to the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō in 1896. Okakura was still director and his influence ensured the hiring of Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958), Shimomura Kanzan (1873-1930), and Hishida Shunsō (1874-1911). All three had been part of the first class of students at the school under Hashimoto Gahō, who was still an instructor, and Kanō Tomonobu. However, in 1896, Kuroda and Kume were added to the newly established yōga section of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō. The new faculty represented a new perception of yōga after the Chicago exhibition, possibly due to the use of yōga painters like Koyama Shōtarō as war artists during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95.¹⁵²

One observer took the new appointments to Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō as a sign that the different sectors of Japanese art were coming together, and it was the only way for

¹⁵¹ Murakami, 44-47.
¹⁵² Roberts, 93.
Japanese art to progress. However, various art societies continued to hold separate exhibitions through the 1890s with yōga was receiving the most public attention.\textsuperscript{153} The public attention that yōga had got after the exhibition in Kyoto seems changed the perceptions of yōga as a viable form of Japanese painting. At the same time, the enthusiasm for nihonga had waned since its poor reception in Chicago. Other factors also contributed to the decline in nihonga’s monopolization of institutional support. In 1898, Okakura was forced to resign as director of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō. There were several factors involved in Okakura’s ousting. Most prominent was a public affair between Okakura and the wife of Kuki combined with Okakura’s heavy drinking during the 1890s. Two former teachers heavily criticized Okakura’s administrative style, favoritism with faculty and students, and emphasis on exhibitions in Tokyo newspapers.\textsuperscript{154} The Japan Weekly Mail commented that Kuki and Okakura had clashed over the Kuki’s decision to add yōga to the school, which undermined Okakura’s ideological control of the school. Okakura’s resignation was protested with the resignation of nineteen of the thirty-three faculty members at the school resigning in protest.\textsuperscript{155} Okakura and the many of the former staff, including Gahō, Taikan, Kanzan, and Shunsō formed the Nihon Bijutsuin (Fine Arts Institute of Japan), which was an independent nihonga school.

The decade following the establishment of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō saw dramatic changes in the government support of painting ideology. The strong connections between the conservative groups like the Ryūchikai and various government ministries ensured the continual support of traditional painting styles through exhibitions. These styles were

\textsuperscript{153} The Japan Weekly Mail, May 16 1896.
\textsuperscript{154} Weston, 161-62.
\textsuperscript{155} The Japan Weekly Mail, April 23, 1898.
also associated with the export market because many traditional painters were from
Kyoto and were involved in the design industry making support of traditional styles
economically beneficial as well. The brief and almost total support of *nihonga* through
the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō marked a significant shift in support of a more progressive
painting style that combined recognizable Japanese styles with historical subject matter
and certain European techniques. However, *nihonga* failed to achieve support abroad
because understanding the aesthetic qualities also required the international community to
accept Okakura and Fenollosa’s conception of Eastern idealism as an alternative to
Western realism. After leaving Japan in 1890, Fenollosa was appointed curator of
Oriental art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, where his ideology influenced
museum acquisitions in America.\(^\text{156}\) Yet, audiences and judges at the Columbia
Exposition favored works by traditional painters but not as “history paintings.” This
suggests that the ideology of *nihonga* was not well received abroad. The increased
activities of *yōga* painters and societies presented a third alternative to create a national
painting within the existing European art philosophy through the use of Japanese subject
matter. The institutionalized support of *yōga* at the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō created a three-
way split in the types of painting ideology supported by the government and art thinkers
during the final years of the nineteenth century.

\(^{156}\) Fischer, 16.
Chapter 4: Painting during the Final Years of the Meiji Period

From 1900 until the end of the Meiji Period, two factors were involved the determination of national painting. Domestically, the support for traditional, yōga, or nihonga by government institutions and art societies was fairly equal. However, the international reception of Japanese painting was characterized by high praise for the uniquely “Japanese” qualities of traditional-style painting, while foreign audiences at international exhibitions overlooked yōga and nihonga. The previous chapter discussed the importance Japanese art thinkers had placed on the creation of history paintings to fulfill the same functions as works like Eugène Delacroix’s (1798-1863) 1830 Liberty Leading the People, which was recognizable throughout Europe as a representative piece of French art and national identity. However, this level of international recognition was not achieved by contemporary Japanese painters nor was there a Japanese consensus on what constituted Japanese national painting during the Meiji Period. During this period, many painters and art thinkers continued to conceptualize painting as socially conscious along the lines of yōga and nihonga, while some writers in Japan called for the fusion of both sides to develop Japanese painting. Others turned abroad, seeking to build an international audience for Japanese painting through Western language publications and involvement with European and American collectors. These things occurred during a period when Japan and its arts were gaining international prestige through military and political victories, but a contemporary national painting did not find significant and unified international or domestic recognition.
The end of yōga’s exclusion from government institutions and increased backing through private art societies with influential supports resulted in both yōga and nihonga represented on equally alongside contemporary traditional painters at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris for the first time at a world’s fair. The organizers of the Paris exhibition placed special importance on it. Three years before the exhibition, the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce declared that Paris was especially important because it was the first time that a “victorious Japan” would appear at a world’s fair. Regarding the fine arts section, he hoped that submissions would be of “new and improved design showing the characteristics of the country.”

However, the officials behind the organization of the fair seemed to still favor traditional painters. As part of the art section, the Imperial Tokyo Museum under the supervision of Kuki Ryūichi compiled *A History of the Japanese Arts* to accompany the exhibits. The book is important because it is the first work on Japanese art history written by a recognized Japanese authority and published in a foreign language. Okakura began the work, and it was translated into French for the exposition. The preface, written in 1899 by Kuki, shows the influence of Okakura’s ideas. Despite public falling out between two, Kuki shared Okakura’s idea of Japan as the museum of East Asian art. On the first page he declares Japan as the inheritor of “all that was beautiful and refined” from Indian and Chinese art traditions from the reign of Asoka and Tang and Sui Dynasties of China and India. The majority of images in the book focus on images and

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157 *Japan Times*, April 15, 1897.
sculptures from temples that show strong Buddhist influence. The timeline is not entirely comprehensive. It begins during the seventh century and ends with the art of the Kamakura period. The first section of the book deals primarily with the national characteristics of the Japanese people and special features of their painting and allied arts, likely in order to remind the reader that Japan remains unique despite the influences of China and India. Some of the language and national characteristics ascribed to the Japanese people are similar to the catalogue for Philadelphia in 1876, but the differences in nearly twenty years of incorporating and refining European concepts about art and nationality are also evident. Specifically, where the Philadelphia catalogue explains the differences between Chinese and Japanese art, this book connects them.

_A History of the Japanese Arts_ ascribes eight characteristics that “from time immemorial…have been characteristics of every Japanese, and are indeed at the root of Japanese civilization, blooming forth in Art, in Literature, and in whatever is beautiful and elevated.” These traits included purity, loyalty, fertility of the imagination, manual dexterity and a love of nature, which the Japanese owed to innate racial characteristics that allowed them to see certain foreign influences, like Buddhism, in a unique way. It also states that the Japanese people dislike the “vulgar and over-wrought” and “detest dazzling colours [sic] and gorgeous decoration as only fit for pleasing vulgar eyes and exciting low sentiments.”^{159} It is highly likely that this was a reference to _ukiyo_e, and it was aimed at foreigners who the government worried had formed incorrect notions of Japanese identity through exported prints. The statement was meant to disconnect Tokyo

159 _A History of the Japanese Arts_, 3-5.
with the Edo of the recent past in the eyes of the international community, and reconnect it to the period of more refined arts associated with Kyoto and the aristocracy.

It elaborates that painting and literature are at the root of all Japanese art. For painting, it was specifically the Chinese linear ink drawing that was introduced during the reign of Suiko that became the basis for Japanese painting.\(^{160}\) Since that time, the book says that Japanese painting has taken on several key characteristics that are part of its aesthetics. The first is linear drawing done with a brush and ink, which is closely related to calligraphy because brush strokes form the basis for both. There is an intentional ignorance of chiaroscuro and scientific perspective because Japanese painting prizes idealism over realism, which was a reiteration of Okakura and Fenollosa’s beliefs about East Asian painting. In composition, it says Japanese painters prefer light colors and simplicity of arrangement. The unfinished qualities observed by foreigners are explained to be intentional use of empty space.\(^{161}\) The description of Japanese painting and its prized qualities in this book borrow from certain parts of Okakura’s ideology, but explanation of the perceived deficiencies show that the text was specifically meant to extol the merits of traditional Japanese painting, rather than incorporate the criticisms against perspective and shading as *nihonga* painters had done. In doing so, it shows consciousness against the European critics, but makes an authoritative statement for Japanese painting ideals. Additionally, the text stops with the painting and arts of the Kamakura period, while it is negative of aspects of painting that began in Edo, which severs a link between the past and contemporary *nihonga* painters. It instructs the reader in the alternative aesthetics of Asian idealism, but only with regards to traditional

painting styles, rather than progressive Japanese-style painters. The text does not comment negatively on current painters, but it does not attempt to link them with the characteristics of Japanese painting in the introduction or through the use of traditionally Japanese subject matter.

In the fine arts section, works from over thirty yōga painters and fifty-five nihonga painters represented Japan. The number was dramatically higher than the single painter displayed at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago and reflects the increased support of yōga within Japan. A German art historian and critic present at the Exposition praised the skill of Japanese yōga paintings. Mizuho Murakami suggests that selections of yōga paintings was motivated by subject matter rather than technical skill. She notes that nearly all the selections featured either Japanese women or scenes from rural Japanese life that were not affected by westernization. The motifs of rural life and women were popular in European painting as well. The selection of subject matter was conscious of portraying scenes from Japanese life that were already popular in photo albums of Japan at the time, and they were identifiably Japanese. The works are also notable because they did not fit the definition of history paintings like Harada Naojirō’s Kannon Riding a Dragon. Because of this, fairgoers were able to connect with Japanese paintings through a familiar representation of rural laborers, although the clothing and people might have seemed exotic. It should also be noted that the use of Japanese women as subjects fit with the international image of Japan as the land of the geisha, a figure of Japanese life closely related with Edo culture and popular in ukiyoé prints. Just as Murakami suggests, this shows a bias in selection of subject matter that is

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162 Murakami, 50-51.
163 Murakami, 62.
recognizably Japanese, but it is combined with the modern implications of oil painting.\textsuperscript{164} None of the painting characteristics provided in \textit{A History of the Japanese Arts} can be ascribed to the \textit{yōga} with regards to subject matter or execution, but the use of Japanese subject matter was in line with the belief that a recognizably Japanese style could be created with oil painting and Western realism. The public and fine arts jurors at Paris were generally dismissive of \textit{yōga} and \textit{nihonga}. The highest award, a gold medal, was given to Ōhashi Suiseki’s (1865-1945) \textit{Tiger}, a painting depicting a realistic tiger.\textsuperscript{165} Suiseki was a \textit{nanga} painter who specialized in painting lions and tigers. The award of Suiseki’s painting shows the continued foreign preference for works exhibiting realism in traditional Japanese styles.

Contemporary Japanese painting received some critical attention at the next major world’s fair in St. Louis. The Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904 was Japan’s third major American exhibition. Around three hundred pieces were selected for the fine arts exhibit by Japanese judges. Paintings included traditional works on silk and paper as well as ones in oil and watercolors. The handbook for the Japanese sections only contains a short summary of the fine arts sections, in which it mentions the works in the “European style,” but emphasized that viewers of the Japanese fine arts will see that “artists still retain their old traditions and artistic skill.”\textsuperscript{166} The inclusion of \textit{yōga} painters in the handbook shows a continuation of the equal representation of the three main painting ideologies seen in Paris four years earlier.

\textsuperscript{164} Murakami, 53.
\textsuperscript{165} Conant, “Refractions of the Rising Sun,” 85.
\textsuperscript{166} Hoshi Hajime, \textit{Handbook of Japan and Japanese Exhibits at World's Fair, St. Louis, 1904} ([St. Louis]: 1904), 116-17.
St. Louis saw an increased promotion of *nihonga* painters. Hashimoto Gahō painted eight submissions for St. Louis. A short book, titled *Hashimoto Gahō, One of the Greatest Artists of Japan*, was published in English the same year. The book includes a biography of Gahō, a brief history of Japanese painting, Gahō’s views on painting, and numerous selections from his works. Given the date of its publication, it is likely that the book was intended for American readers as an accompaniment to Gahō and other *nihonga* artists at the St. Louis fair. It touches on two familiar points in Japanese art history, the introduction of Buddhism in the seventh century and the first paintings of “truly national character” during the Fujiwara period. Both periods had been previous highlighted by Okakura and others as critical points in the development of Japanese painting and the arts. The book restates the link between Japan and the rest of East Asia through Buddhism. It is also critical of the contemporary painters working in traditional styles that were popular at previous world’s fairs. It states that Kawabata Gyokushō, Taki Katei, Araki Kampo, and Kōno Bairei, and others are only “styled masters” and “cannot be said to have any way lighted up the darkness, nor to have revived the practically dead art.” Although Gyokushō and Kampo were professors at the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, they were specialists in traditional styles that were favored by those with a conservative painting ideology, but condemned by Okakura and Fenollosa because their patronage was stagnating the development of Japanese painting. All the artists named in the book had received awards or critical praise for their *kachōga* at previous exhibitions, including ones in America. In this sense, the publication of this book directly addressed the

167 Kobayashi, 2.
168 Kobayashi, 1-3.
169 Kobayashi, 6.
popularity of traditional painting in American, and presented Gahō and *nihonga* as the correct alternative.

*Nihonga* painting ideology had also been propagated in English by the efforts of Okakura. Since his resignation from the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, Okakura had published two important books in English that explained the basis for *nihonga* as Japanese national painting and his belief that Japan was the curator of East Asian and Buddhist artistic and philosophical ideals. His *The Ideals of the East* and *The Awakening of Japan* were published in 1903 and 1904, respectively, in both America and England. At the same time, Okakura had formed strong ties to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston through his connections with Fenollosa and William Sturgis Bigelow. In *The Ideals of the East*, Okakura describes the Eastern idealism as “the expression of the Spirit as the highest effort in art,” with Spirit being “the characteri[z]ation of the soul of things.”

*Nihonga* was no longer just the expression of modern Japanese national identity, but the expression of the unification of Japan, India, and China. He felt it was up to Japan as the “new Asiatic power” to revive an invented tradition “old Asiatic unity” through the selection of appropriate elements of Asian identity and contemporary European civilization. The goal of such writings was to create an international public that could intelligently receive the idealism expressed through Japanese painters like Gahō and the second generation of *nihonga* artists like Taikan, Kanzan, and Shunsō. It was also to use specific subject matter, namely certain elements of Buddhism, to connect Meiji Japan with its pre-Edo past.

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At St. Louis, Okakura delivered a speech titled the “Modern Problems in Painting.” He defended contemporary nihonga painters and Eastern idealism as Japanese national painting to the negative comparisons with realism. Okakura said that the main problem facing contemporary painters was the importation of Western art philosophy. This is not to say Okakura felt that Japanese art was essentially better, but he argued for the acceptance of it as an alternative, but equal, artistic approach. In an essay written the following year, Okakura argued, “there is no Realism in Art… Art is a suggestion through Nature, not a presentation of Nature itself.” He blamed the problem facing Japanese artists domestically and abroad on the public that receives art with “the sense of subjugating beauty for the sake of display” which has resulted in the international community only recognizing the colors of ukiyoe and the realism of kachōga rather than the intent of the individual artist.

The goal of creating an educated public for Japanese national painting seemed to have yielded some positive results for nihonga in St. Louis. Hashimoto was awarded a top prize for his painting Mount Hōrai and Sunrise, a landscape. This painting was different from traditional landscape paintings in that it was a new conception of the landscape as a representation of a modern “politicized space” rather than a traditional motif borrowed from Chinese painting.

As cited in previous chapters, the affinity for nature and geography of the Japanese islands was considered a key factor in the

175 Mizuta, 41.
emergence of uniquely national characteristics. Thus, paintings of Japanese landscapes represent the Japanese national identity.

The success of Japan’s fine arts submissions at the Louisiana Exposition was concurrent with military victories of Russo-Japanese War. It was also the first time China was included in the fine arts section of an international fair. Through both accomplishments, Japan proved itself superior to China in traditional art and in modern military sciences to Russia. On the fairgrounds too, Japan managed to acquire all of the allotted space for the Russian exhibit after the Russian delegation decided not to participate at St. Louis. Through the exhibition Japan earned the respect of the imperial powers of the world through its artistic and military accomplishments. However with regards to painting ideology, the difference in awards going to traditional painting at Paris and nihonga at St. Louis represented the unresolved debate concerning Japanese national painting.

Following the establishment of the yōga section within the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō under Kuroda, the increased Meiji support of Westernized painting seemed to be a likely possibility. In the year following the St. Louis exposition, the demand for works by contemporary Japanese artists domestically and internationally increased along with Japan’s newfound international prestige resulting in a renewed debate over Japanese painting. However, the Nihon Bijutsuin and its exhibitions and painters from the first class of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō kept nihonga relevant within the discussions of history painting and its aesthetic meaning. Soon after the opening of the new nihonga institute,

Taikan and Shunsō developed a new style that they felt more accurately represented Japanese painting. It was called mōrō (haziness) school, which referred “hazy, coloristic landscapes that eschewed the use of traditional delineating line” both painters began producing. They believed that because the ink line was Chinese, it could never represent Japanese painting, but they believed the hazy color gradations of mōrō were essentially Japanese. The new painting philosophy was at odds with the beliefs of their teacher Gahō. He believed that the essence of Japanese painting was the expression of kokoromochi, or “conduct of spirit,” and the use of the line. Taikan and Shunsō later went to India where they exchanged painting ideas and techniques with brothers and Indian nationalists Rabindranath and Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1931), and began to incorporate India motifs into their painting. Yokoyama Taikan’s 1909 Lamps Afloat (figure 7) depicts Indian women observing a Japanese Buddhist practice creating an illusionary Japan-India tradition. The painting also lacks the use of distinct lines to create folds in clothing and outlines of facial features associated with traditional Japanese painting. In doing so they were representing certain parts of Okakura’s beliefs, but making a break from their Kanō background, which was characterized by the use of the line. With Okakura’s departure for America, the solidarity of the nihonga circle fell apart during the early 1900s.

Taikan’s paintings were prominent in the discussion of history painting as well. Following an 1898 exhibition of the Nihon Bijutsuin, Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902), a Tokyo University professor, began a debate over the aesthetic characteristics of history

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179 Kobayashi, 14-15.
180 Wattles, 51-51.
painting. Takayama felt that appeal of history painting lay in two aspects. The first was the attempt to explain a certain part of history, while the other was the ideal expression of beauty through a historical setting from reality.\(^\text{181}\) The perceived beauty of a historical painting was not connected to the representation of historical reality, thus a work’s two merits were beauty and education of the past. His views initiated a rebuttal by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1858-1935). Tsubouchi felt that history painting was meant to show the aesthetics of the past rather than contemporary notions of beauty. This made history painting special because it objectively placed beauty in a real setting as opposed to paintings that tried to express beauty through fantastical subjects.\(^\text{182}\) The debate between these two scholars is important because it shows that art critics and thinkers were looking for meaning in imported European art concepts on an aesthetic and philosophical level.

Some \(yōga\) painters also sought to separate themselves from the institutionally backed leadership of Kuroda and Kume. A group of \(yōga\) established the Taiheiyō Gakai (Pacific Painting Society) in 1902. The painters in this group had been members of the Meiji Bijutsukai and had links to the Barbizon style taught by Fontanesi. The artists of this group traveled to Europe via America where they would sell paintings to raise funds for the trans-Atlantic voyage. Several of these painters trained under Jean-Paûl Laurens (1838-1921) and were characterized by the use of browns in shading as opposed to the purples of Kuroda and Kume’s group.\(^\text{183}\)


\(^{182}\) Watanabe Kazuyasu, 119.

\(^{183}\) Yamanashi, 33-34.
Other intellectuals in the Japanese art world began to see the increasingly fractured state of painting as detrimental to the progress of Japanese art. Yōga painter and art critic Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958) saw the inherent dichotomy created by Fenollosa and Okakura in the 1880s as the main issue preventing the creation of a unified national painting style. Ishii expressed his ideas in a series of articles between 1902 and 1906. Under a dichotomous system, each style possessed problems that prevented it from becoming a nationally and internationally recognized Japanese art. Nihonga was too bound to tradition and institutions that limited the expressive ability of the artist. But, yōga had an ambiguous relationship to Japanese society, and often employed subject matter that was disconnected from what Ishii perceived as national character. He proposed that the advantages of both should be combined to create a “new, perfect Japanese painting” that would “accurately depict the external form… and express Japanese nature and inner life.” Ishii’s ideas were a rejection of the proposed Eastern idealism as an alternative to Western realism. He saw the future of Japanese painting as a creation of Japanese style and subject matter with Western painting techniques.\footnote{Ishii Hakutei, quoted in Hirayama, 59, 58-60.}

European books published on Japan and its art during the early 1900s reflected the fractured state of Japanese painting as well. Travelogues and general surveys of Japanese arts continued to praise the works of traditional Japanese artists like Kawanabe Kyōsai as the greatest painter in recent history. Descriptions of Kyōsai were often highly romanticized, such as the account of him living in poverty with a stick of Indian ink as his most treasured possession.\footnote{Mortimer Menpes, Japan, a Record in Colour (London: A. & C. Black, 1902), 70.} The way Europeans were trying to understand Japanese aesthetics had changed as well. At a meeting of the Japan Society of London, a member
presented a paper titled “Impressionism in Japanese Art.” The speaker, Alice Hart, explained that the foundation of Japanese art was essentially impressionistic and based off reality. She cited how Japanese painters first study subjects in nature with great diligence before attempting to paint them from memory.186 The observations by Hart, who had met with Okakura while in Japan, are interesting because it was a shift in how some Europeans were attempting to understand Japanese art using European art ideology as a basis. Other works looked for elements of realism, but in Hart’s speech there is a synthesis of the realism that was appreciated in Europe with Okakura’s explanation that Japanese painting sought create the ideal of a subject. However, Hart did not share Okakura’s assessment of contemporary painters, and felt that a truly great painter had yet to emerge from Japan.187

Five years later, the Japan Society of London began to discuss the progress of yōga at their meetings. In 1906, the Japan Society of London held an exhibition of recent yōga painters. One member acknowledged the progress of Japanese painters in Western techniques, but only to the extent that they were contributing to European painting. He stated that Kuroda and Kume had yet to create a distinctly Japanese style.188 The reaction to the exhibition was mixed. Some members felt that it was a mistake for Japan to encourage artists working in Western painting styles, although the dominance of Western styles was inevitable. On the other hand, one member of the Society felt that the works of yōga painters had refreshing subject matter compared to traditional styles that repeated

187 Hart, 255.
the same motifs of previous masters. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which was tied to American supporters of *nihonga* through Fenollosa, had also been exhibiting *yōga* painters. In 1900, the Boston Museum showed one hundred oil and watercolor paintings by Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950) and Nakagawa Hachirō (1877-1922). American collectors purchased nearly all the paintings. The same year the museum held a second exhibit with three hundred watercolors. However, Gerald Bolas suggests that the *yōga* paintings were popular during the early 1900s in America for their realistic depiction of exotic lands rather than perceived artistic merit. These painters receiving support in America were members of the Taiheiyō Gakai, and both aforementioned painters were pupils of Koyama Shotarō who were known for their paintings of rural landscapes and scenes from daily life.

Other works show the effect that publications by Okakura and others had on the international art community with regards to Japanese art. Laurence Binyon’s *Painting in the Far East* recognized Asian painting as artistically mature as European art. Much of Binyon’s introduction to the book echoes Okakura and Fenollosa’s views on East Asian aesthetics. Binyon acknowledges East Asian use of color as an equal to Europe’s depiction of form in terms of artistic contributions to the world. In Binyon’s book, the artistic merits of China and Japan are recognized as fine art, rather than just decorative art. In his section on modern Japanese painters, he praised the work of *nihonga* painter

189 Dixon, 162-63.
191 Roberts, 177, 201.
193 Binyon, 19.
Shimomura Kanzan, who had been part of the first class of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō under Okakura, and like many others, Binyon hoped that Japanese art will resist the incursion of Western practices.\textsuperscript{194}

Okakura’s English publications were not the only attempts by Japanese art thinkers to promote the artistic accomplishments of Japan to the international community. In 1905, \textit{Kokka} became a solely English publication. Since its first issue, \textit{Kokka} had been strictly Japanese, with English summaries in some of the later volumes. But, the publication had been popular amongst foreigners interested in Japanese art for the high quality images included with the articles, and articles were sometimes translated for foreign audiences. The goals of the new \textit{Kokka} were to counter the belief that Japan is only modern in its military accomplishments, and secondly to provide authoritative information on art from a Japanese source. The introduction to the 1905 version states that \textit{Kokka} hoped to correct the “glaring misconceptions” on Japanese art often found in books written with only European or American source material.\textsuperscript{195} The organizers of the new \textit{Kokka}, however, had a different ideological orientation that the previous Japanese language edition begun by Okakura, Fenollosa, and others. The new \textit{Kokka}’s articles suggest that it favored the promotion of traditional painting and arts rather than \textit{nihonga}, although many of Okakura’s original ideas are preserved.

\textit{Kokka} also published a four-part installment on the characteristics of Japanese painting by Taki Seiichi in 1905. Taki believed that past comparisons between East Asian and European painting were inaccurate because the differences were not based on the techniques preferred by each region’s painters. Instead, Taki believed that the

\textsuperscript{194} Binyon, 225-26.
fundamental difference that in Europe painters used objective qualities of a subject to express ideas associated with it, while Japanese painters seek to capture the subjective qualities.\textsuperscript{196} The first installment is clearly based on Okakura and Fenollosa’s notions of East Asian idealistic painting, while the following ones are a fusion of Okakura and the ideas of Japanese national characteristics from the Philadelphia fine arts catalogue.

In the second article, Taki discusses the qualities of \textit{kachōga}. He attributes the practice partially to the appreciation of nature inherent to the Japanese identity, but explains the metaphorical function of nature imagery in Japanese painting. Just as in poetry, Japanese painters prefer to convey feelings and ideas through the representation of natural subjects.\textsuperscript{197} Taki seems to be one of the first Japanese art scholars that attempted to explain the meaning of realistic pictures of animals, birds, fish, and flowers to a large English speaking audience. In Fenollosa and Okakura’s work, \textit{kachōga} and the Shijō style are described as decorative and not addressed in the same way as other painting style they considered to be higher forms of art.

The final installment addresses the importance of brush strokes in Japanese painting, explaining that it is the goal of the artist to produce a painting in as few strokes as possible.\textsuperscript{198} Based on the description of the painting techniques, it is likely that this portion of Taki’s article is focused on \textit{nanga}, which was dismissed by Fenollosa and not taught at the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō under Okakura. Taki also explains that the paintings by Hokusai and other \textit{ukiyo-e} artists of the Tokugawa period are looked down on in Japan because they use incorrect brush strokes and therefore their works are decorative. Taki

believed that brush strokes were central to the higher forms of Japanese painting. Interestingly, like Alice Hart, Taki attributes impressionistic qualities to Japanese painting because it seeks to capture the artist’s first impression of the subject in his explanation of brushwork. Whether Taki incorporated the ideas based on impressionism from European trained painters like Kuroda or from reading works of foreign authors, it was still an appropriation of European art terminology to make Japanese painting accessible to an international audience. Two years later, Taki’s views on contemporary painting was published in Kokka. He believed that modern Japanese painting had entered a stage of “decadence.” Taki believed that the problem lay in the disjointed state of Japanese painting that caused artists of the three main ideological factors to produce inferior works because they exaggerate stylistic differences for political reasons.

The ideological divides of Japanese painters and art critics was evident in the works selected for the last major international exhibition of the Meiji period. It was the second time Britain had hosted a dual-country exhibition after the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908. Participation was important to Japan’s international image because it implied equality between Japan and one of the most powerful countries in the world. Though only two countries were represented, the scale was similar to previous exhibitions with over eight million attendees during a six-month period. Compared to earlier world’s fairs, Japan’s painting section was small. Only forty-eight paintings were

200 The Japan Weekly Mail, August 10, 1907.
selected from over one hundred submissions for the modern art section which featured only living artists. Nearly three hundred paintings by deceased artists were included from private collections, museums, and even the Imperial Household for the retrospective art section. Included in this category were three paintings by Kanō Hōgai and two landscapes by the recently deceased Hashimoto Gahō. Kikuchi Yōsai and Taki Katei were also displayed in this section. In the retrospective art section, prominent painters of the previous decade were canonized as masters of Japanese fine arts alongside other established painters including Hiroshige and Hokusai.

In the contemporary art section, the representation of nihonga, traditional paintings, and yōga was fairly uniform. Both nihonga and traditional painters were included together in the Japanese painting section. There was fairly even number of landscapes and Shijō nature paintings, including a painting of a peacock by Araki Kampo. There were several paintings that represented historical subject matter, such as a six-panel screen painting called Alarmed by Odake Kokkan (1880-1945) showing defenders of a castle preparing for battle. Shimomura Kanzan had a landscape titled Autumn Forests, and Kawai Gyukudō (1873-1957), but they were the only pupils of Hashimoto and Okakura’s Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō. Another popular subject was paintings of everyday women in kimono. Dancing Girl by Takenouchi Seihō (possibly Takeuchi) shows a woman in a kimono with an umbrella, reminiscent of a geisha. Women, both Japanese and Western, were common in the yōga section as well, along with landscapes.

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Wada Sanzō (1883-1967) represented Kuroda Seiki’s painting doctrines with *Southern Wind* (figure 8). The motifs in the *yōga* submissions is similar to Paris, although certain paintings showing flowers and women in Western clothing suggest that the effort to create a Japanese style within Western painting had fallen out of favor by 1910. Rather than the conscious hybridity of Japanese subject in Western painting, the selection of subjects at London seems to lack unity that would be representative of national character.

The reaction to the paintings in the British press was mixed. The *yōga* paintings without distinct Japanese subject matter were praised for their technical achievements, but only reinforced the European notion of Japan’s “wonderful power of imitation” because these paintings were seen as undistinguishable from European ones. One article in the *Times* commented that the traditional paintings had also illustrated the Japanese capacity for imitation of Chinese painters. The same article called Japan a “nation with a genius for imitation” in arts and in war. The *Official Report* of the exhibition stated that the overall presentation of paintings was an improvement of the works shown at St. Louis, but there was still nothing to be called a masterpiece. The report commented that the *yōga* paintings were easier for visitors to understand, but there was still a failure to combine elements of idealism and realism that prevented the critical success of the painting exhibit. It was observed that the sharp divide between *yōga* and *nihonga* gave the impression Japanese painting was “halting between two opinions,” and neither style was a critical success. The general feeling of the British public was that

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204 See Appendix A for the list of paintings at the Japan-British Exhibition.
Japan needed to develop its own methods instead of clinging to traditional styles or imitating European ones.\textsuperscript{208} The modern art exhibit prompted Marcus Huish, a Japanese art historian, to include a section on Meiji art in the third edition of his book \textit{Japan and Its Art}. Huish had been a strong proponent of Japan preserving its traditional art and European recognition of it as a fine art, but after nearly twenty years, he felt the situation was unchanged. The reception in Britain was poor and Japanese painters were limited by adherence to the tradition of the line or Western art.\textsuperscript{209} Japan was acknowledged as achieving certain aspects of modernization associated with imperial nations, but the paintings exhibited at London faired little better in terms of critical reception by the international public than they had almost two decades earlier in Chicago.


Conclusion

Painting in the Meiji Period developed under imported ideas of aesthetics, the public function of art, and art as an expression of national identity. Following the report of the Iwakura Embassy, the problems and contradictions that came with modernization were introduced, but no direct solutions were suggested. However, it was emphasized that Japan needed to become a competitive nation on the international stage in order to reverse the Unequal Treaties.\(^{210}\) Within this atmosphere, prominent members of the Meiji government began measures to modernize the function of art and painting within Japan during the 1870s following the return of the Iwakura Embassy and the Vienna exhibition. What resulted was a negotiation between the desire to modernize Japan as quickly as possible while preserving the historical traditions and promoting national identity. The painters of the Meiji period responded to this as active participants in the politicized environment of public exhibitions. While it cannot be said that one type of painting, or any art, is characteristic of a given period, a survey of art and aesthetic history during the Meiji period shows that painters and intellectuals actively competed for public support and government sponsorship to become Japan’s national painting style. However, the concept of a Meiji national painting that emerged from the 1870s never completely materialized at home or abroad. Divergent opinions amongst foreign audiences and domestic painting circles prevented a unified presentation of Japanese national identity in art. The independence of the artist, which Okakura supported in his rhetoric, was consistently secondary to the belief that a painting must serve some kind of public

\(^{210}\) Soviak, 34.
function beyond its aesthetic merits. Therefore, the history of Meiji painting is a history of how ideas regarding what style of painting would fulfill that role changed as Japan imported and interpreted European art theory throughout the Meiji Period.

In the first decade of the Meiji government, advancements in military, industrial, and commercial sectors took precedent. State sponsorship of contemporary artists was motivated by the benefits to science and technology through the scientific representation of nature achieved by Western painting and drawing techniques. Under slogans like \textit{bunmei kaika} (civilization and enlightenment), the Meiji government supported art as part of a broader movement to Westernize Japan as quickly as possible. The Meiji government’s first official exhibition was the Vienna Universal Exhibition, where it prepared goods for the exhibit with this mentality. After the exhibition, members of the committee and foreign advisers returned to Japan with recommendations that the government continue to focus on the development of applied and decorative arts due to the potential profits to be made through the European and American export markets. Three years later, Italian artists were hired to teach Western-style art techniques at the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō for the purpose of training engineers.

During the same time, prominent foreign visitors to Japan were discussing Japanese arts in periodicals and books. They built on the enthusiasm for Japanese decorative goods that began in the 1850s and 1860s. These critics praised Japanese art for its decorative qualities, but ultimately felt that it did not compare to European fine arts due to the preference for idealism over realism. In the following decades, foreign scholars echoed the negative comparisons between Japanese and European. This perception was
also seen in the exclusion of Japanese artists from the fine arts sections at the Vienna and Philadelphia world’s fairs.

The painter Takahashi Yuichi questioned the utilitarian perception of painting and other arts during the 1870s. Since the 1860s, he had believed that the realism in Western-style painting could be used as a tool to build Japanese national identity. During the Meiji Period, he advocated painting portraits of Meiji heroes to promote current ideals and beliefs. Also during the 1870s, Nishi Amane translated works on German aesthetics into Japanese. Nishi’s contributions were important because it laid the foundation for understanding imported European aesthetic theory in Japan in the next decade.

In the second decade of the Meiji period, Western aesthetics and understanding of fine arts were introduced to circles of politicians and intellectuals who were already interested in the preservation of ancient Japanese art. As translations of aesthetics and participation in international exhibitions increased Japanese exposure to European art, Japanese art thinkers saw a need for the creation of national painting mode. Okakura and Fenollosa popularized the notion of the competitive dichotomy between Western and Eastern aesthetics for government sponsorship to a receptive audience. They succeeded in securing institutional support for nihonga painting at the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō. The activities of Okakura, Fenollosa, and others during the 1880s increased public and political awareness for contemporary painters through the exhibitions and promotional activities of the Kangakai. Similarly, conservative groups like the Ryūchikai provided exhibition space for displaying pieces of art from private collections and works by current painters working in traditional styles. However, the process of incorporating European art ideas and rearranging Japanese art traditions had started during the previous
decade. The 1880s was a period in which the social function of Japanese art was adapted to European beliefs. Paintings in styles from traditional genres were taken from private spaces and placed in front of a new art public in defined spaces. This was a reversal of what constituted popular pictorial art during the Edo period. Exhibitions and museums eliminated the cost barrier that prevented the majority of people accessing Kanō and nanga painters through individual patronage. Paintings that were previously kept in temples or the homes of the wealthy were placed in public viewing spaces for an audience that potentially included the entire spectrum of Tokyo’s population. Ukiyoe prints were no longer the only pictorial art readily accessible to the mass public. What resulted was a period of redefining popular painting so that it was in line with modern Meiji and Western social norms.

The establishment of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō and the closing of Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō effectively excluded yōga from public institutions. The painting exhibitions and competitions during this period by societies and government groups that supported Japanese-style painting prevented yōga’s inclusion in the re-codifying of popular art despite the activity of painters like Takahashi Yuichi and other alumni from the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō. The effort to educate a public that could receive and support Japanese painting did not extend to the international audience. During the same period when Okakura and Fenollosa were active in Japan, a number of books by respected art intellectuals were published in the West. Like the publications of the 1870s, these authors lacked formal education in Japanese art. They based their works on personal travel experiences or access to early collections of Japanese art in Europe. As was the case with Gonse, he never traveled to Japan, but relied on Parisian art dealers like Wakai
Kenzaburō to assist him regarding Japanese art. These authors gained notoriety for their expertise on Japanese art in the absence of works by Japanese authors or other educated authorities on the subject. Their assessments and preferences for the realism perceived in paintings of animals, birds, and flowers and the coloring and novelty of works by ukiyoe painters guided the tastes of the international community. These authors also marked a continuity of criticisms originally leveled by foreign audiences in the previous decade.

Both trends were evident at the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893. The Japanese committee made an extensive effort to represent itself as an Eastern nation that was not completely Westernized. The Japanese submissions to the fine arts section and those displayed in the Hōōden were from nihonga and traditional painters to present Japan’s national characteristics, which were rooted in Eastern aesthetics to an international audience. The interior of the Hōōden was decorated according to three distinct epochs of Japanese art determined by Okakura, and painted by the faculty of the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō. Each of the periods represented a tailored history of Japanese art to educated foreign audiences with the aspects of Japanese fine art. Yōga painters were essentially excluded from participation at Chicago, and not represented in or connected to the Hōōden. However, the critical reception of Japanese painting in Chicago was mixed. Many awards in the fine arts category were given to Japanese painters from traditional styles for their works in landscapes, kachōga, and other depictions of animals. The submissions by the nihonga painters championed by Okakura and Fenollosa did not get significant foreign attention. The way foreign audiences viewed the paintings was influenced by the established appraisals of Japanese art by European and American critics despite the purpose of the Hōōden as an educational tool.
Concurrent to the institutional support of nihonga and traditional styles was the reemergence of active supporters of yōga. Harada Naojirō and Kuroda Seiki were among the yōga returned to Japan in the late 1880s and early 1890s after studying painting in Europe to find little government support for their painting work. By creating private schools and new art societies that exhibited yōga works, these painters gained support within the art community allowing them to participate in venues like the National Industrial Expositions. The broader exposure of yōga resulted in the appointment of Kuroda as head of a Western-style painting section at the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō after its exclusion from Chicago. The exhibition of Kuroda’s Morning Toilette at the National Industrial Exhibition created considerable controversy over the role of Western-style painting and its use of subject matter more associated with ukiyo for Japanese audiences. Yet, even Kuki recognized the legitimacy of yōga from at least an economical perspective in his defense of Kuroda’s painting. Following the appointment of Kuki, Okakura resigned from Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō and formed a private nihonga institute with a number of Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō faculty members who had resigned with him.

The absence of Okakura and many of the central nihonga painters did not mean the exclusion of nihonga from international exhibitions. All three major painting ideologies were equally represented at Paris exhibition in 1900 and St. Louis in 1904. The reaction at both exhibitions was similar to the reception at the previous exhibition. Foreign audiences continued to prefer the realism and “traditional” Japanese qualities in landscapes and the treatment of small animals, birds, and flowers. At St. Louis, Japan’s military successes against Russia and achievements in historical art earned it the moniker
“Greeks of the East.” Unlike previous appearances at world’s fairs, both these fairs occurred during a period when authoritative art history publications by Japanese were published in English and other European languages. The first was a compiled history of Japanese art sent to Paris by the Japanese exhibition committee. Three years later, Okakura published the first of two books that were concerned with Japanese art history and the role of Japan as the point of synthesis of artistic and philosophical ideals from India and China. Furthermore, Okakura’s publications instructed readers on how to understand Eastern idealism in painting and how to view works by contemporary painters like Hashimoto Gahō. *Kokka* switched an entirely English language publication as well. These publications mark a concerted effort to educate the international community on Japanese and Eastern notions of “fine arts.” Additionally, some European and American students of Japanese art were reinterpreting the elements that Okakura referred to as “idealism” as impressionism in the attempt to understand Japanese art within European art. The reception of these publications was limited, and the unfavorable comparisons between Japanese art to Western fine art and national paintings remained in the early 1900s.

The first decade of the twentieth century was also marked by the divergence of groups within Japan’s main painting ideologies. Shimomura Kanzan and Yokoyama Taikan decided to abandon delineated forms in their paintings, while Gahō continued to view the ink line as one of the basic qualities of Japanese painting. Within yōga circles, major support was divided between Kuroda’s group, which consisted of the Hakubakai

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and the Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō, and the Taiheiyō Gakai, who were the students of members of the Meiji Bijutsukai. Amongst traditional painters, the artists from Kyoto painting schools and societies became central to contemporary traditional painting. The submissions from the 1910 Japan-British Exhibition were largely from Kyoto-based painting groups, which was a change from previous exhibitions that consisted mainly of Tokyo-based painters. The revival of traditional arts in Kyoto is outside the scope of this study, but remains an important development within the political sponsorship of painting in the 1900s. Works by painters within all three major groups were presented at the Japan-British Exhibition. The foreign reaction to Japanese paintings shown at the London exhibition is consistent with that of earlier international reception at world’s fairs.

National painting required international recognition, and nihonga and yōga failed to achieve sufficient reception to emerge as an internationally recognized Japanese painting style. The result was a split between the nihonga and yōga support through institutions and public venues during the second half of the 1890s until the end of the Meiji period. At the same time, conservative art societies and the economic benefits associated with preservation of traditional painting styles kept traditional artists in Japan’s painting exhibits at world’s fairs. The divides in painting support led to equally divided reception in the international community regarding Japanese painting as a fine art despite the numerous publications by Japanese authorities on the subject during the 1900s. Only recently have art historians in Japan begun to examine the effect of limited
international recognition of painters from the Meiji Period and its affects on early modern Japanese art.\(^{212}\)

The notion of promoting a national identity domestically and internationally began in the first decade of the Meiji period. This study contributes to the existing research on the creation of Japanese national identity through painting by attempting to contextualize public sponsorship of painting during each decade. The activity of Takahashi Yuichi and language used in the catalogue for the Philadelphia place the connection between national identity and painting well before Fenollosa’s speech to the Ryūchikai in 1882. The official catalogue for Philadelphia explicitly describes national characteristics that are evident in the selected works for the exhibition and part of all Japanese painting and art. This evidence shows that members of the Meiji government understood the connection between a country’s identity and its art soon after the Vienna exhibition. The translations by Nishi Amane facilitated the further understanding of European fine art notions, but the basis of fine arts as representative of national character on the international stage was understood. Yuichi’s rhetoric seems to have been partially received as well. Though he was not commissioned to paint Meiji heroes in oil, the government did support the publication of *bunmei kaika-e*, or civilization and enlightenment prints. These woodblock prints featured Westernized aspects of Meiji culture, like trains and Western-style buildings, and were intended for mass consumption

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similar to *ukiyo-e*. They were politicizing woodblock prints in order to propagate Meiji ideals to a popular audience in a similar manor to Yuichi’s proposal.

The historical narrative of painting as a tool for national identity, both domestically and internationally, cannot be restricted to the *nihonga* and its development. Okakura and Fenollosa saw the contemporary painters adhering to traditional schools as artistically anachronistic and stagnant, but did not deny the aesthetic value of certain past painting epochs. The support of Okakura and Fenollosa’s ideas was only unanimous regarding the conservation of ancient art, creating public venues for historical and contemporary art, and the creation of a government sponsored art institute. But, the exclusive institutional support of developing a neo-traditional Japanese style of painting was experimental and short lived. The success of *nihonga* required international audiences to be versed in Japanese and Eastern aestheticism and have the knowledge to understand the historical and cultural aspects of Japanese motifs. The frequent publications in English and other languages that attempted to do this found a small receptive audience. Throughout the Meiji period, the support of painting and other arts was conscious of European and American tastes, both in terms of fine arts and for the economic reasons. These external factors kept paintings by traditional artists in the submissions at world’s fairs and various exhibitions. By considering them, it helps explain the roughly equal presentation of the different painting ideologies at the world’s fair during the last decade of the Meiji period. The combination of divided showings at world’s fairs and the export market helps to explain the foreign resistance to accepting *nihonga*, *yōga*, or traditional styles as a national painting on the same artistic level as the

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history paintings of Western nations. Though many artists of both *nihonga* and *yōga* ideologies created skillful works now preserved in museums, the Meiji period failed to produced a unified national painting style that created a lasting impression domestically and internationally. Instead, the Meiji period was characterized by the exportation of multiple variations of Japanese national identity represented abroad in the form of different styles and motifs. This study is only a partially complete as it focuses on the paintings exhibited in Japan and at international exhibitions and the active construction of identity within Japan. A comprehensive study of paintings that were purchased and displayed by foreign museums and galleries is needed to understand the images of Japan being constructed through its art independent of Japanese input. Additionally, a survey of museum collections would require an extensive investigation of Okakura and Fenollosa’s influences on the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston as comparison. These were part of the internal and external factors affecting the formation of Japanese identity during the Meiji period. In general, those within wanted to show Japan as a modern nation able to stand alongside European countries, while abroad there was a strong desire to characterize Japan as nation of artisans and geisha. Understanding the negotiation and interaction of both forces is needed to fully understand the creation of a Meiji national identity and how it shaped foreign perceptions of East Asian.
Appendix A

Painters Exhibited at World’s Fairs

The following list of painters was cross-referenced with *A Dictionary of Japanese Artists, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Prints, Lacquer* by Laurance P. Roberts. In some instances the spelling of an artist’s name was corrected from the source material. In other cases, where the misspellings or lack of information prevent the artist from being identified, the source spelling has been left intact and is designated with quotation marks.

**Centennial Exhibition, Philadelphia, 1876**

Kikuchi Yōsai

Tanaka Honi

Fukushima Ryūho

Kishi Seppo

Kawanabe Kyōsai

Hasegawa Settei

Megata Kaian

Yamazaki Tōsen

Nagasaka Suiho

Numata Masayuki

Suzuki “Hyakunen”

“R.” Tanaka

“Shi-o-kawa” Bunrai

“S.” Nishimura

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214 The Imperial Japanese Commission to the International Exhibition at Philadelphia, 1876, 28.
“S.” Sakaguchi

Watanabe “Seisai” [possibly Watanabe Seitei]

Shibata Zeshin
World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893

Taki Katei, *Peacocks*

Noguchi Yūkoku, *A Group of Carp, with Water Weeds*

Kōno Bairei, *A Landscape in Autumn*

Hashimoto Gahō, *A Landscape in Misty Atmosphere*

“Kmagai” Naohiko, *A Landscape* [spelling from source]

Watanabe Sei'tei, *Roosters on a Cart in Snow*

Kishi Chikudō, *A Tigress*

---, *A Fight Between a Kite and a Crow*

Suzuki Shōnen, *Spring Scenery*

---, *A Snow Scene*

Hasegawa Gyokjun, *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* [spelling from source]

Hashimoto Chikanobu, *Customes in the Tok[u]gawa Period*

Taniguchi Kōkyō, *A Cherry Blossom Picnic in the Middle Ages*

Kose Shōseki, *A Great Japanese Teacher, Shotok[u]taishi*

Imao Keinen, *A Group of Carp*

“Tsulzawa” Tanshin (Oshōkun), *An Old Chinese Court Lady*

Araki Kampo, *A Rooster and a Hen among Banana Plants by the Water Side when it is Raining*

Taniguchi Kōkyō, *A Cherry Blossom Picnic in the Middle Ages*

Nomura Bunkyo, *A Landscape during Rain*

Ikeda “Shins(e/a)i,” *The Kawanakajima Battle* [spelling from source]

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215 Department of Fine Arts, World’s Columbian Exposition, 384-91.
Sugitani Sesshō, *A Landscape, in black and white on silk*

Kikuchi Hōbun, *Herons by a Pie Tree Alongside Water*

Tasaki Sakan (Soūn), *The Top of Fujisan*

Mochizuki Gyokusen, *Fish in the Hotzugawa River*

Imao Keinen, *Monkey running from an Eagle*

Kawabata Gyokusō, *A Toy Seller*

“Mrass” Gyokden, *Japanase Pheasants*

Taniguchi Taichi, *Peacocks on a Pomegranate Tree*

Miyake Gokuyō, *Cats, Butterflies and Peony*

Kobayashi Gokyō, *A Flock of Ducks*

Hara Ryutarō, *A Falcon on a Pine Tree*

Mumemura Keisan, *Autumn Flower in Moonlight*

Muraoka Ōtō, *A ”No” Dance*

Takahashi Gyokuen, *A Flock of Ducks*

Uju Yajiro, *A Group of Carp*

Mori Shungaku, *An Eagle watching his Prey from a Tree*

Suzuki Kason, 6 paintings in the Nikko Temple [possibly from the Nikko temple or of it]

Asae Ryukyō, *A Peacock on a Cherry Tree*

Fuju Gyokushō, *Snow Scenery*

Yuike Masaaki, *A Battle (Maeda Inuchiyo)*

Hada Gesshu, *Kinkakuji Temple*

Takeuchi Seihō, *A Landscape*

Yamamoto Shunkyō, *Snow Scenery*
Kawabe Mitate, *The Battle of Namboku Court*

Takahashi Gyokuen, *Cherry Tree and Swallows*

Ikeda Keisen, *A Flock of Ducks*

Kanō Tomonobu, *Heichi Battle*

Nakagawa Sosuke, *Rice Field and Rising Sun*

Kubota Beisen, *Two Eagles Carry off a Rabbit*

“Kael-yama” Tokusaburo, *Hakkok* [spelling in source]

Andō Chiutato, *A Temple*, oil

---, *Flower Sight-seers*, oil

* Indicates that the painting received an award.²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Department of Fine Arts, World’s Columbian Exposition, 20.
Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1900

Yōga

Matsui Noboru, Sansui

Miyajima Hideki, Keshiki

Takashima Noboru

Wada Eisaku, Toba no yūkei

Shirataki Ikunosuke, Keiko

Fujishima Takeji, Chihan

Hirose Kappei, Iso

Shōdai Tameshige, Nageami

Yuasa Ichirō, Gyofu no banki

Fujimura, Umibe

Tamaki Terunobu, Chūsan no shitaku

Kuroda Seiki, Mizube

---, Shūkō

---, Chi kan jō

---, Juin

---, Sekibaku

Kita Renzō, Shimai

Nakazawa Hiromitsu, Saru mawashi

Kume Keiichirō, Keshiki, Landscape

---, Keshiki, Landscape

---, Murakami, 88-89.
---, *Keshiki, Landscape*

Andō Chūtarō, *Akebono, Sunrise*

Yamamoto Morinosuke, *Kusa, Grass*

Yoshida Hiroshi, *Kōzan ryūsui*

Nakamura “?tarō,” *Kōyōson*

Mitsutani Kunishirō, *Hasuike*

Ishikawa Toraji, *Asatsuyu*

Yazaki Chiyoji

Shōno Sōnosuke

Yoshizawa Gizō, *Nara no Fuji, Wisteria of Nara*
The Japan-British Exhibition, London, 1910

*Nihonga and Traditional Paintings*

Murase Gyokuden, *Peonies and Barnyard Fowls*

Takashima Hokkai, *Landscape*

Sakamaki Kogyo, “*Shakkyo*” of the *No Dance*

Araki Kampo, *Pheasants in Autumn*

Araki Jippo, *Early Summer*

Suzuki Kason, *Ferry-boat in the Rain*

Nomura Bunkyo, *Mount Fuji seen from the Sea*

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Kaburaki Kiyotaka, *Beauty*

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Kawai Gyokudō, *Landscape under the New Moon*

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---, *Rabbits and Monkeys*

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Kanokoggi Takeshirō, *Portrait of a Woman*

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Kuroda Kiyoteru (Seiki), Woman and White Tree-Lotus
Appendix B

Figures

Figure 1. *The Far East*, January 4, 1873.
Figure 2. Takahashi Yuichi, *Salmon*, 1877, oil on canvas, Tokyo University of the Arts,
ARTstor: ARTSTOR_103_41822003287172.
Figure 3. Hashimoto Gahō, *Moonlit Landscape*, 1889, hanging scroll, Tokyo University of the Arts, ARTstor: ARTSTOR_103_41822003287446.
Figure 4. Kanō Hōgai, *Kannon the Merciful Mother*, 1888, pigment on silk, Tokyo University of the Arts, ARTstor: HUNT_57612.
Figure 5. Kanō Hōgai, *Eagles in a Ravine*, ca. 1885-86, ink on paper, William Sturgis Bigelow Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, ARTstor: AMICO_PHILADELPHIA_103882648.
Figure 6. Shiba Kōkan, *View at Mineguri*, 1783, pigment on paper, Kobe City Museum, Kobe, Japan, ARTstor: HUNT_57605.
Figure 7. Yokoyama Taikan, *Lamps Afloat*, 1909, silk, ARTstor: HUNT_57627.
Figure 8. Wada Sanzō, *South Wind*, 1907, oil on canvas, Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art, ARTstor: HUNT_58816.
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