

THE SOFT POWER OF RIMPA:
TRACING A FLUID CREATIVE PRACTICE
ACROSS SPACE AND TIME

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Abstract

This expository thesis builds on current knowledge of the 17th century Japanese painting school known as Rimpa. Revisiting its multifaceted history leading up to 2015, there are three pivotal moments in its 400-year-old history that shape our understanding of Rimpa as a cultural soft power. Additionally, I highlight celebratory events in 2015 as continued efforts of the repeated cooption of Rimpa's soft power to influence public perception and inform local identity. I posit that the longevity and relevancy of Rimpa, as a creative practice, is attributed to its fluid qualities that afford it longevity, relevancy, and the ability to be repeatedly reconfigured and adapted to the visual language and concerns of the zeitgeist.

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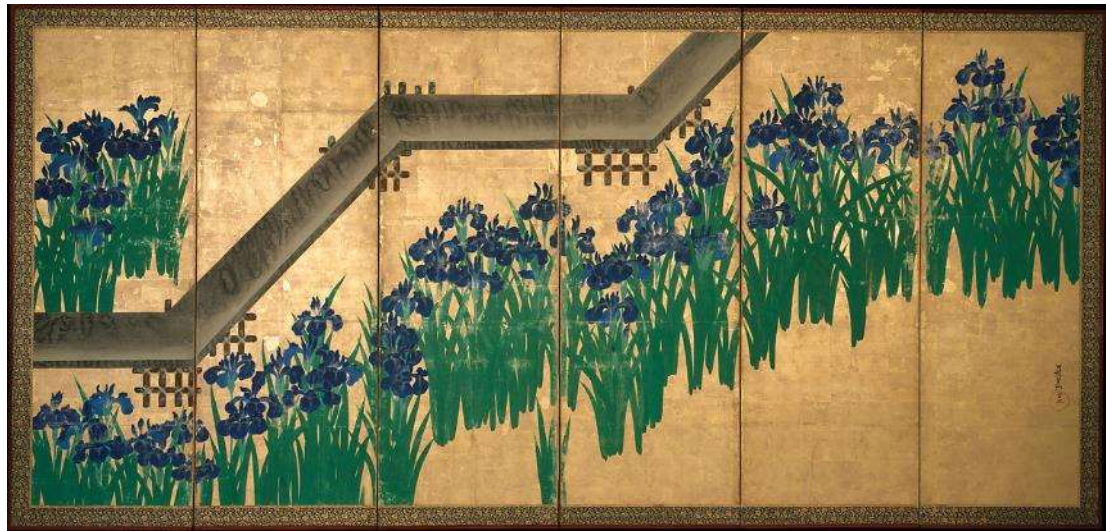


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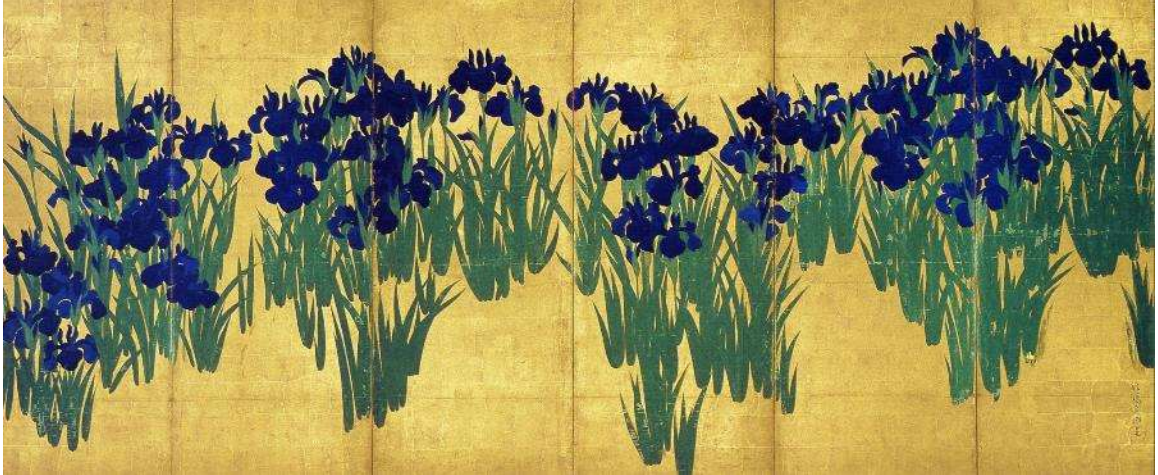


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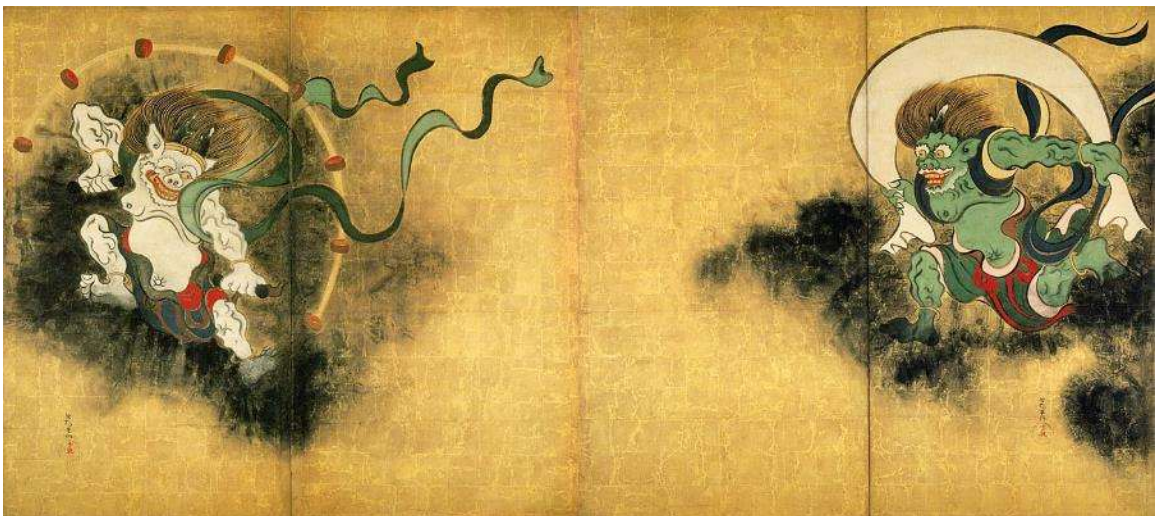


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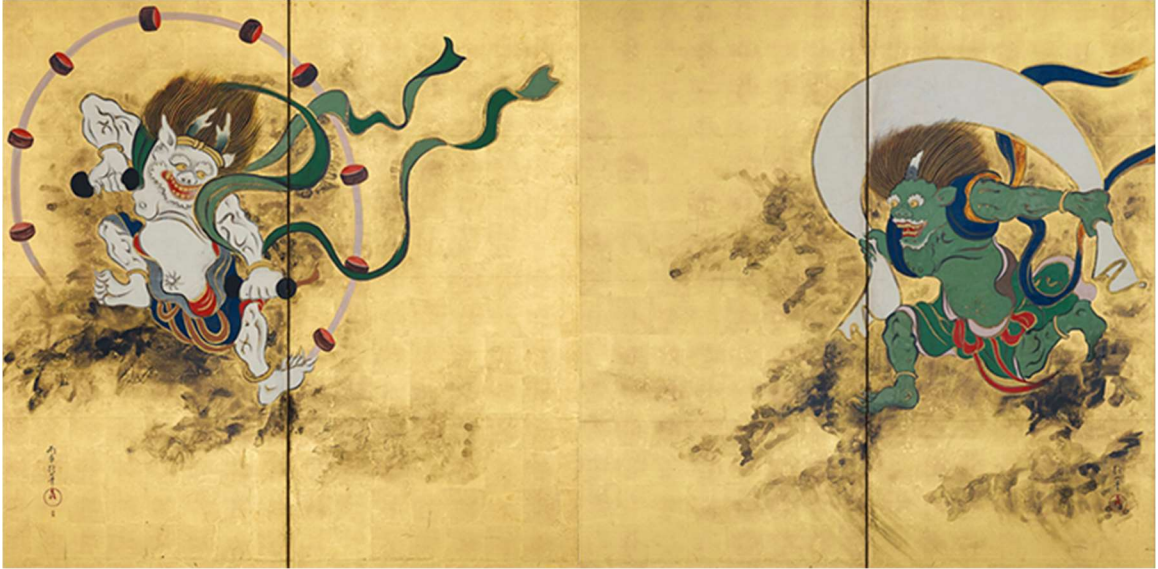


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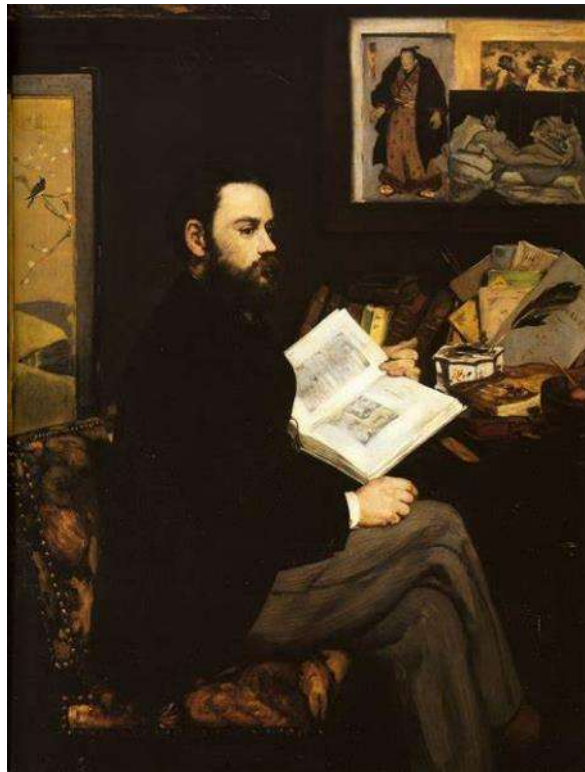


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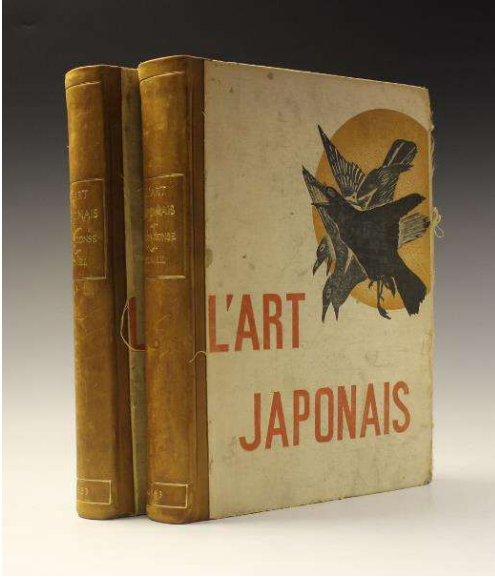


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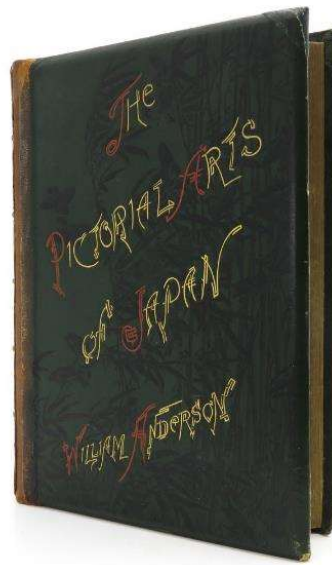


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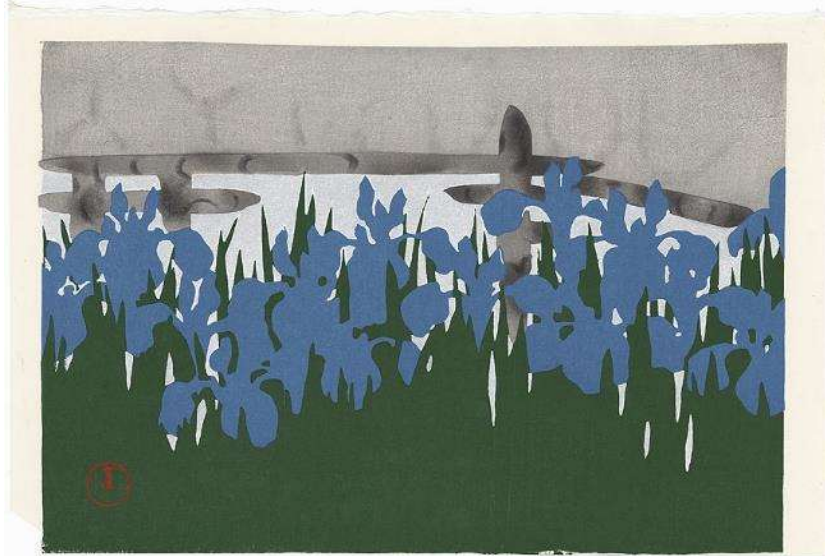


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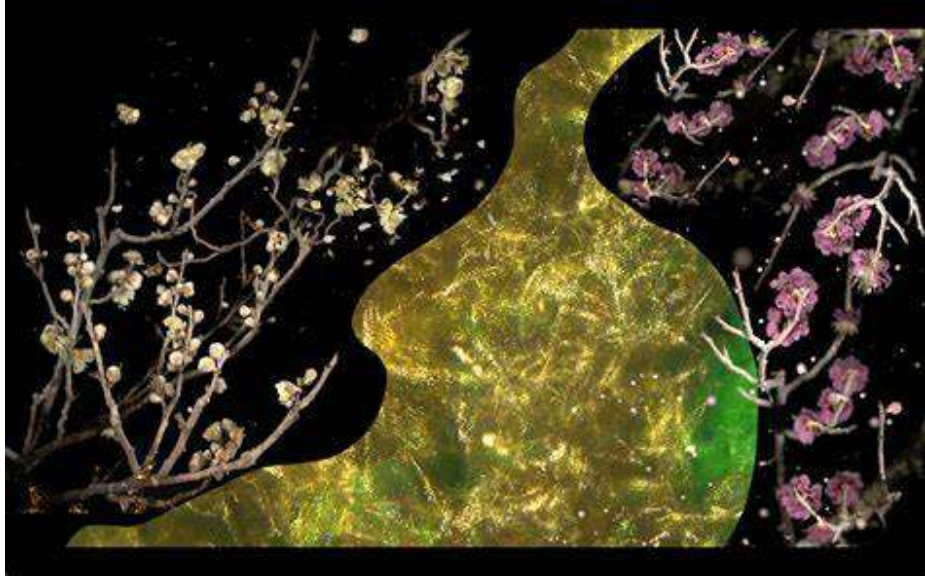


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Preface

While studying at the Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies in Yokohama, Japan from 2014 to 2015, I noticed a trend of national museums, privately held art collections, craft guild galleries, as well as nationwide department store chains simultaneously hosting exhibitions celebrating Rimpa, a painting style and design movement that emerged in Kyoto in the early 17th century. As I learned of more cultural spaces and retailers hosting upcoming Rimpa-themed shows and celebrations, I grew curious in the collective motivation to commemorate this 400-year-old painting tradition on such a large, unified public scale.

Looking more critically into Rimpa's art history, I recognized a disconnect in the messaging circulated to promote the 2015 celebrations. Extensive marketing campaigns communicated conflicting ideas of Rimpa as an inclusive creative practice while at the same time highlighting its canonized status as a traditional painting school and visual symbol representing modern Japanese cultural identity. How could these 2015 events conflate commercial activities, Japanese pop culture, with the painting style practiced by artists Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558-1637) and Tawaraya Sōtatsu (1570-1640) in the 1600s? Responding to this question, I hope this thesis brings to surface the gaps in information by acknowledging the circumstances throughout Rimpa's history that shaped its myths as well as paved the way for new contexts and interpretations.

Moreover, a major driver in pursuing this topic was to gain a strong understanding of Rimpa's fluid and shapeshifting capabilities so that I may extend my analysis to digital art works. I wanted to not only uncover the historical markers of Rimpa's conceptual and material transformations over the last few centuries, but to also understand why it is so alluring for technologists like the Tokyo-based art collective teamLab (founded 2001) to adapt into their immersive art experiences. Drawing upon the findings of my thesis, I look forward to exploring this topic and historicizing the next generation of artists who are reinterpreting and reforming Rimpa through emerging technology to create human-centered art experiences.

Note on Japanese Names

In this thesis, personal names of Japanese individuals are written in the conventional Japanese order, which is family name preceding the given name (e.g., Ogata Kōrin), except if the individuals adopted the conventional Western order, which is given name followed by family name (e.g., Naoko Tosa).

Introduction

Commonly associated with Ogata Kōrin (1658-1716), the influential artist of its namesake, Rimpa (or Rinpa as it is alternatively spelled) is an ornate design movement that originated in Kyoto, Japan in the early 17th century. It is often characterized as a revitalization of *yamato-e* or the Japanese-style painting mode developed in the 9th century known for its use of vibrant greens and blues generated with mineral pigments. As described by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Japanese Art Curator John Carpenter, Rimpa is projected through the adoption of motifs, themes, and visual qualities. "The artificial rounding of hills, flattening of natural forms, stylized bands of mist or clouds, and the extravagant appreciation of gold, silver, and mineral pigments – not to mention the more obviously germane representations of flowering trees and plants in dreamlike settings – all underlie what we refer to today as the 'Rinpa aesthetic.'"¹

Rimpa works span across media type despite its narrow art historical canonization as a traditional painting school during Japan's rapid transformation into a modern nation in the late 1800s. In 2015, Kyoto's RIMPA 400 festival was one of many highly visible events that recentered the early 17th century artistic practice as an inclusive, multimedia design movement. Other similar projects included Tokyo Art Fair's special exhibit of Pop Art interpretations of famous Rimpa works by Japanese contemporary artists, and a traveling exhibition of paintings and ceramics from the Hosomi Museum's extensive art collection that was held nationwide at Takashimaya department stores.

In the last four hundred years, Rimpa underwent repeated episodes of recontextualization which brought forth new configurations. Beginning in the early 20th century, art historical scholarship on Rimpa culminated in efforts to elevate it by coding it as Japan's equivalent of the European renaissance, a classical revival of Heian period (794-1185) court

¹ John T. Carpenter, *Designing Nature: The Rinpa Aesthetic in Japanese Art*, New Haven: Yale University Press (2012), 12.

culture and aesthetics. Influenced by art historian Satō Dōshin’s extensive scholarship on Westernization’s impact on the formation of Japan’s art history,² I deviate from traditional inquiries on Rimpa to introduce an alternative narrative recognizing Rimpa’s multifaceted history by focusing on three key developments in its 400-year history. This includes acknowledging Japan’s urgency, as an emerging nation state in the early 20th century, to codify a robust art history that could compare to the West and unite its people as an imagined community.³ Tracing Rimpa’s conceptual development and its expansion brings forth new insight that launches the transtemporal and transmedia design movement into discourse on the formation of cultural identity, cultural heritage, and its repeated misappropriation as a weapon of culture.⁴

Chapter One revisits Rimpa’s past and presents a synthesis of scholarship that seeks to demystify the painting genre that has come to be known as “Rimpa.”⁵ Viewing Rimpa through a lens akin to “the period eye,”⁶ the scholarship of art historians Elizabeth Lillehoj, Nakamichi Keiko, and Tamamushi Satoko centers the social relationships, such as the influential role of

² For example, Satō Dōshin, “*Nihon bijutsu*” *tanjō* (The Birth of “Japanese art”), Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1996.

³ A concept developed by political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson, an imagined community refers to the social construction of a community by those who identify as members of that group. Originally applied to analysis on the origin and spread of nationalism, it is also applied to the development of special interest communities. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.

⁴ Published in 2017, art educator and curator Nato Thompson’s book *Culture as Weapon* traces practices in which individuals, governments, and corporations have used cultural tools like images and historical narrative to manipulate and persuade. Nato Thompson, *Culture as Weapon: The Art of Influence in Everyday Life*, Brooklyn: Melville House Publishing, 2016.

⁵ Prior to the formal adoption of the term “Rimpa” in the early 20th century to describe the movement popularized by Hon’ami Kōetsu (1558-1637), Tawaraya Sōtatsu (1570-1640), and Ogata Kōrin (1658-1716), this painting style was referred to by several monikers including the “Sōtatsu school” (Sōtatsu-ha), the “Kōetsu school” (Kōetsu-ha) and the “Kōrin-school” (Kōrin-ha).

⁶ Art historian Michael Baxandall introduced an analytical method called the “period eye,” emphasizing the need for viewers to read images as documents that visually record the social activities of the time period. Over 40 years have passed since the first edition of *In Painting & Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* was published, however, it remains an influential text in art historical methodology for those interested in art and its social history. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 2nd ed, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

patrons and their impact on research production that contributed to the canonization of Rimpa artists and the establishment of a pseudo lineage.

Chapter Two introduces three pivotal developments that transformed the conceptual understanding of Rimpa. These developments are its transference from Kyoto to the city of Edo (modern day Tokyo) and Edo Rimpa's localization efforts by artists like Sakai Hōitsu (1761-1828), the impact of Rimpa's reverse importation back into Japan after an overwhelmingly positive reception of Ogata Kōrin's works exhibited abroad, and lastly, the abstraction and reconfiguration of Rimpa with cutting-edge, image producing tools of the time by artist Kamisaka Sekka (1866-1942) and graphic designer Tanaka Ikkō (1930-2002).

Chapter Three unpacks the 2015 celebrations of Rimpa as they connect to two related and juxtaposed manifestations that I refer to as "Local Rimpa" and "Global Rimpa."⁷ Despite occupying opposite sides of the spatial spectrum, each manifestation is a demonstration of Rimpa's soft power⁸ to represent regional and cultural identity. Focusing my discussion in this thesis on Local Rimpa, I look at the recent revival efforts of Rimpa and how its soft power was wielded to reassert the cultural identity of Kyoto as part of a larger movement that appropriates the community-based urban development practice known in Japan as *machizukuri*⁹ or cultural placemaking.

Throughout this thesis, I make mention of and ask the reader to consider a selection of works that I chose to lend visual support as primary sources for my argument. Despite my act of

⁷ Use of the terms "local" and "global" are borrowed from cultural theorist Stuart Hall and his discussion on culture and ethnic identity in flux due to globalization in his 1997 essay "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony D. King, 19-40, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

⁸ Political analyst Joseph S. Nye coined the term "soft power," defining it as the ability to influence the actions of others through seduction and persuasion. It describes the non-coercive influence that culture has in the realm of international affairs, particularly American pop culture. Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.

⁹ A method of Japanese urban planning, *machizukuri* projects are typically driven by community residents who engage in collaborative partnerships with government officials and policy makers to rebuild and revitalize spaces.

curating a list of images that may inadvertently suggest or contribute to an idea of an artistic hierarchy, I am not concerned with inventing or using existing parameters to measure any of the referenced artwork's authenticity or assign it aesthetic value. Rather, my objective is to trace the development of Rimpa across its visual manifestations to demonstrate that it is a rich creative practice that is significantly broader than its canonized status as a premodern painting genre. As far as I am aware, this thesis is the first that offers a recount of the 2015 celebratory events to be included into Rimpa's contemporary art history. This research serves as my attempt to bridge connections between the disparate forms that Rimpa embodied in the last four hundred years and grasp the overlapping sensibilities that grants it the ability to transcend media, time, geographies, and experiences.

Chapter One: Rimpa's Emergence in Kyoto

The Edo period (1603-1868)¹⁰ was a time of pivotal change in Japan's history as it marked the beginning of over two centuries of domestic isolation, peace, and cultural flourishing. Travel, both domestic and international, was restricted and the importation of foreign goods was heavily regulated by the Tokugawa Shogunate government.¹¹ *Sakoku* or self-imposed isolation encouraged artistic and cultural development that was perceived to be free from external, foreign influence. To consolidate their legitimacy to rule, the newly installed Shogunate government sought to stabilize the victories of their military campaigns, stimulate growth in commercial and agriculture sectors, and establish a new social structure that privileged the warrior class.¹² Despite these measures, Edo period society witnessed the rise in economic stature and influence of business leaders and merchants. In reaction to this shift in economic power, the Shogunate government imposed sumptuary laws, which included the prohibition of conspicuous demonstrations of wealth, such as ostentatious dress.

Rimpa emerged in Kyoto when Japan's political and military capital was uprooted from Kyoto and moved to Edo, a city known today as Tokyo. Art historian Kōno Motoaki referred to Rimpa as "the flower of Momoyama culture,"¹³ noting its flamboyancy in contrast to scenes of war and socio-political upheaval depicted in works created during Japan's Warring States era. Despite its connection with courtly culture, Rimpa is not perceived as an aristocratic art and its playful and simple visual qualities appealed to audiences regardless of their depth in knowledge of its literary references. Concerned that Kyoto would suffer the same fate as the ancient capital

¹⁰ "Edo period" and "Tokugawa period" are terms used interchangeably when talking about Japanese premodern era between 1603-1868.

¹¹ Limited foreign trade was conducted from 1641 to 1854 by a Dutch colony established on an artificial island called Dejima in Nagasaki, Japan.

¹² Elizabeth Lillehoj, "Introduction" in *Critical Perspectives on Classicism in Japanese Painting, 1600-1700*, ed. Elizabeth Lillehoj. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2004), 1.

¹³ Kōno Motoaki, personal interview by Erika Enomoto, Kyoto, Japan (November 4, 2015).

of Nara (710-794),¹⁴ the remaining aristocracy and cultural authorities made major investments to preserve the imperial capital as the center of the country's artistic and culture development. One such investment was the 1615 founding of Kōetsu Village, a community of artisan craftsmen.¹⁵ Kōetsu Village was located on the outskirts of the city in the northern Kyoto area known as Takagamine. This land was granted to the business leader and craftsman Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558-1637) by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), Japan's first military ruler.

Conceptually, Rimpa referenced and repurposed themes that exemplified the grandeur of Kyoto's classical past for the consumption of both elite and plebeian citizens. Kōetsu, who was a master calligrapher, and his frequent collaborator Tawaraya Sōtatsu (active c. 1600-1640) drew inspiration from artists who worked in the style of the Tosa school, known for their colorful illustrated stories sourced from Heian period (794-1185) court culture and literature. In addition to drawing inspiration from the Tosa school, Rimpa practitioners adopted practices popularized by the Kanō school, who applied Chinese-style ink painting and brush techniques to render images of thematic subjects drawn from Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, all academic painting styles popular among the newly established ruling class.

Prevalent scholarship described the Rimpa mode as neo-classical, yet artists working in the 17th century did not hold a shared understanding of a "classical" age of art they were credited with resurrecting.¹⁶ Despite comparisons of Kōetsu's and Sōtatsu's artistic style to Tosa school paintings, their work was not considered a continuation of that school's painting style. Art historian Tamamushi Satoko suggested that rather than seeking to uphold courtly painting traditions, Sōtatsu's adoption of Heian period themes and literature were, in fact, more similar

¹⁴ The city of Nara was the former imperial capital before it was moved to Kyoto.

¹⁵ Worth noting is that the 1615 founding of this community would come to be acknowledged in the present as the year of and birthplace of the art movement, legitimizing the Kyoto-backed 400th anniversary of Rimpa celebrations discussed in Chapter Three.

¹⁶ Lillehoj, "Introduction," 2.

to the Edo period's woodblock print subgenre of *mitate*,¹⁷ and that Sōtatsu's intention for drawing upon historical imagery was simply out of parody.¹⁸ However, Sōtatsu's visual references are still, for the most part, interpreted and communicated as a conscious renaissance of *yamato-e* court paintings. This issue still remains at the center of debate for art historians who question this classicist interpretation as it aided in the construction of Japan's art history.¹⁹

Reintroducing the grandeur of Kyoto's courtly past through Rimpa art works captured the attention of the business leaders and attracted the attention of the emerging merchant class. It was this elite group of educated and wealthy townspeople that became patrons of Kōetsu and Sōtatsu.²⁰ Describing Kyoto's social environment during this time Kōno says, "court nobles who had fallen from grace through warfare were brought into the fold of *machishu*²¹ circles but it was the *machishu* who ultimately took the lead. Their control of commerce and finance gave them economic leeway as consumers."²² After rising to economic prominence, the *chōnin* or merchant class, considered to be the successors of the *machishu*, became the primary market for Rimpa goods. These items included folding screens, hanging scrolls, fans, and ceramics that typically depicted subjects borrowed from nature and composed in a way that evokes literary works of Kyoto's past. This marked a pivotal moment in history where elegance and refinement could be obtained through acquiring symbolic goods, which sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described as

¹⁷ Adapted by artists working in the Edo period, *mitate* is a literary technique from the Heian period in which a poet alludes to a classical work in an act of parody.

¹⁸ Tamamushi Satoko, "Tawaraya Sōtatsu and the *Yamato-e* Revival," trans. Patricia Fister, in *Critical Perspectives on Classicism in Japanese Painting, 1600-1700*, ed. Elizabeth Lillehoj, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2004), 68.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁰ Nakamichi Keiko, "The Patrons of Tawaraya Sōtatsu and Ogata Kōrin," trans. Midori Oka, in *Critical Perspectives on Classicism in Japanese Painting, 1600-1700*, ed. Elizabeth Lillehoj, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2004), 81.

²¹ Term used for business leaders in the sixteenth century.

²² Kōno Motoaki, "Rimpa wa poppu / poppu wa rimpa (Pop Rimpa / Rimpa Pop)," *Artistic Practices*, Tokyo Art Fair Pamphlet (2015), 2.

items that are both commodity and symbolic object.²³ Acquiring items that reflected one's taste was no longer limited to the aristocracy and became an activity that commoners could partake in due to Kyoto's rising crafts industry. Adorning their bodies with *kimono* designed with Rimpa prints, patrons filled their living spaces with paintings, ceramics, and lacquerware, essentially recasting themselves in the guise of courtiers of the Heian period.²⁴ Art referencing the imperial past was not exclusive to Rimpa, but this act began to carry more weight as a nostalgic reminder of Kyoto's past as well as a form of "covert resistance" against the Tokugawa Shogunate by those who saw themselves oppressed by the regime.²⁵

Despite the restrictions imposed on the merchant class, an appreciation for ostentatious and vivid colors such as the rampant use of gold and silver leaf flourished and became wildly in demand. The use of gold leaf as a material bloomed in popularity with dramatic increases in its production and manufacturing during the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568-1600), the final years of Japan's Warring States period.²⁶ The practice of applying gold leaf to one's paintings draws on the processes of the Heian period. Of course, paintings covered in gold leaf served as a status symbol as it figuratively and literally reflected the owner's wealth. From a utilitarian perspective, gold leaf's popularity stems from the use of its light-reflective qualities to augment the dim light cast by candles. In addition to communicating certain aesthetic sensibilities and social class position, Rimpa objects, both ostentatious and subtle, were valued for their

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, London: Polity Press (1993), 113-114.

²⁴ Nakamichi, "The Patrons of Tawaraya Sōtatsu and Ogata Kōrin," 94.

²⁵ Lillehoj, "Introduction," 8.

²⁶ Kōno, "Rimpa wa poppu / poppu wa rimpa (Pop Rimpa / Rimpa Pop)," 2.

utilitarian functions including as vessels and utensils for cultural practices like the tea ceremony.²⁷

Unlike most artisan guilds and painting schools that operated on a strict master-disciple lineage, Rimpa practitioners paid homage to former artists and their works without having studied under their direction. Through pastiche, which is to adopt elements of someone else's work into one's own practice, artists expressed their knowledge gained from extensive study of the master works while also positioning themselves as de facto recipients of this legacy. The rediscovery and integration of motifs from the past was a customary practice among artists working in the Rimpa style. Common themes depicted in Rimpa works were sourced from classical literary sources such as the *Tale of Ise* and Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji*, both written during the Heian period. This shift was thought to demonstrate the artists' desire to restore a sense of continuity and stability by connecting their creative practice of the present to a quasi-historical version of the past.²⁸ Therefore, making historical references also involved artists taking certain liberties in revising themes and subjects.²⁹ In a sense, artists took on the role of curators as they carefully made selections from an archive of themes. This act of reframing the context in which the images appeared served to convey an individual artistic identity that set them apart from their contemporaries.

Rimpa designs that referenced literary themes through embedded motifs were coveted by Kyoto patrons who were knowledgeable in classical court culture. Often in Rimpa compositions, human figures are absent and instead combinations of subjects and forms served

²⁷ Rimpa's connection with tea ceremony has gained recognition through art exhibitions of Ogata Kenzan's ceramics, including 2015 exhibitions at Hatakeyama Memorial Museum in Tokyo and Rimpa inspired tea bowls at the Raku Museum in Kyoto, Japan.

²⁸ During the early 20th century, Japanese art historian Fukui Rikichirō was the first to theorize this rediscovery of classical art traditions in the Momoyama period (1573-1600) as comparable to Western art history's Renaissance movement (1300-1600), both known to be significant period of rediscovering and canonizing artistic and cultural practices of the past.

²⁹ Lillehoj, "Introduction," 1.

to visually reference a work of literature. For example, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is *Iris es at Yats uhashi* (Figures 1 and 2), a pair of six-panel folding screens painted by Ogata Kōrin. This work was identified to reference the *Tale of Ise* in which the poem’s protagonist, Heian period courtier Ariwara no Narihira, is exiled from Kyoto and embarks on a journey to the Eastern Provinces. Moved by the sight of blue violet irises, Narihira pauses to compose a poem for his beloved wife that he left behind in the capital city.³⁰ Although not depicted in the composition, Narihira’s presence is alluded to with the appearance of the *yats uhashi* or eight-planked bridge. This literary reference becomes further abstracted in Kōrin’s *Iris es* (Figures 3 and 4), a pair of six-panel folding screens in the collection of the Nezu Museum of Art in Tokyo, Japan. The painting in the Nezu’s collection does not visually represent the bridges, however, the configuration of the irises is reminiscent of that same scene that unfolds in the Met’s *Iris es at Yats uhashi* (Figures 1 and 2). A point of departure is that *Iris es* (Figures 3 and 4) transports the viewer into the scene from the *Tale of Ise*. The irises are brought to the foreground of the composition, giving the impression that the viewer is standing on the same bridge where Narihira composed his famous poem.

A distant relative to Kōetsu through marriage, Kōrin studied painting under Yamamoto Sōken (active 1683-1706) of the Kanō school. He was skilled in textile design and knowledgeable of popular visual trends through his experience working in his family’s *kimono* business, which exposed him to the work of Sōtatsu and Kitagawa Sōsetsu (active 1639-1650). The latter, Sōtatsu’s successor, became known for his harmonious, stylized renderings of flowers and grasses of the four seasons,³¹ a theme that continues to be revisited and painted by Rimpa followers. Greatly influenced by Sōtatsu, Kōrin painted renditions of Sōtatsu’s famous folding screen paintings, *Waves at Matsushima* (Figures 5 and 6), a majestic, whimsical sea and rock

³⁰ “Iris es at Yats uhashi (Eight Bridges),” Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/39664> (accessed February 3, 2019).

³¹ Sherman E. Lee, “Sōsetsu and Flowers,” *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, vol. 57, No. 8 (Nov. 1970), 267.

landscape painted in verdant hues, and *Wind God and Thunder God* (Figure 7), a composition featuring the grinning Chinese folk deities who ride on smoky clouds that cascade down onto a golden surface. A quick visual comparison between Sōtatsu's (Figure 7) and Kōrin's *Wind God and Thunder God* (Figure 8) is a testament to Kōrin's attempt to perfect Sōtatsu's painting technique by rendering a faithful copy of his spiritual master's work. On the other hand, looking at the two paintings *Waves at Matsushima* by Sōtatsu (Figures 5 and 6) and Kōrin (Figure 9), shows us the recognizable scene of crashing waves on lush, green-covered rocks but with heightened dramatization in the movement of water, which Kōrin depicted by placing more emphasis in stylizing the crests and troughs of the waves.

This interest in creating curated compositions of nature is exemplified in Kōrin's most famous work titled *Red and White Plum Blossoms* (Figure 10), a pair of two-panel folding screens in the collection of the MOA Museum of Art in Atami, Japan. Plum trees and blossoms were a favored subject of Kōrin, and he painted them on a variety of formats including folding screens, scrolls, fans, and pattern books for textile designs. In this painting there are two flowering plum trees, one with red blossoms and the other with white blossoms, flanking a wide river with its surface decorated with swirling, gold-colored lines. The blackened river was assumed to have been originally rendered with silver leaf, however, recently conducted examinations using XRF, X-ray radiography, and high-resolution digital imaging found little metallic traces in the entire painting, debunking claims that the river was originally composed of silver leaf and that the painting's background was plated in gold leaf.³²

In addition to a deep understanding of Rimpa themes and their cultural reference, attaining control over complicated painting techniques was a major component of mastering the style of Rimpa. Intrinsic to the Rimpa movement, *tarashikomi*, which means "dripping in," refers to the application of pigment or ink onto a wet surface, creating a running, pooling effect

³² Yasuhiro Hayakawa, S. Shirono, S. Miura, T. Matsushima, and T. Uchida, "Non-Destructive Analysis of a Painting, National Treasure in Japan," *Advances in X-ray Analysis*, Vol. 50 (2007), 62.

used to create an abstracted crystalline texture. It is frequently used to render subjects of nature such as the lichen that appears on the trunk and branches of the two flowering plum trees that flank the vast, swirling river in *Red and White Plum Blossoms* (Figure 10). Collectors with a trained eye were able to determine a work's provenance by closely observing how successful the technique was executed. This fixation on demonstrating the mastering of techniques like *tarashikomi* is carried over when the design movement is adapted by Edo Rimpa artists.

Chapter Two: Expanding Conceptual Understandings of Rimpa

This chapter introduces three manifestations that will help solidify our understanding of reoccurring events that relate to the concept Local Rimpa to be discussed in Chapter Three. The scope of this chapter is to reconstruct the transition from a technical, materials-based, collaborative design practice into a canonized painting school.³³ Concluding this chapter is a discussion on past revival efforts of Rimpa, and its adaption into commercial arts and graphic design.

Rimpa Moves East: Localizing “Edo Rimpa” Identity

The former practice of integrating allusions of literary references was deemphasized among Edo-based artists like Sakai Hōitsu (1761-1828) and Suzuki Kiitsu (1796-1858). After Rimpa was brought to Edo (modern city of Tokyo), its prior conceptual themes and subjects were recast for a patron audience without an immediate geographical connection to the antiquated Heian court culture. This new localized manifestation would become known to modern art historians as Edo Rimpa. In contrast with Kyo Rimpa, the term adopted in the modern period to describe Kyoto’s own style of Rimpa that cherished its poetic references and themes, literary references were no longer emphasized in Edo Rimpa works. Rather, artists placed greater emphasis on decorative qualities and focused on refining compositional design elements. This differentiation in priorities propelled by the Edo Rimpa movement dismantled connections to Kyoto’s court culture and repositioned Rimpa as a largely bird-and-flower themed decorative style, eventually leading later art historians like Yamane Yūzō to criticize Edo-made works as lacking the cultural

³³ The term “school” is used loosely here as Rimpa was not an official painting school. This classicism process ultimately gave rise to the mythology of a lineage of artists operating independently from one another in space and time including Tawaraya Sōtatsu (active c. 1600-1640), Ogata Kōrin (1658-1716), and Sakai Hōitsu (1761-1828).

depth that was present in the Rimpa works produced in Kyoto.³⁴ Despite this delineation in style based on region, it is worth mentioning that objects designed to appeal to the sensibilities of Kyoto's aristocrats were still acquired by members of the warrior class in Edo who were generally not aristocrats.³⁵

Recognized as the founder of the Edo Rimpa painting style, Hōitsu combined “Kōrin’s aesthetics with the eclecticism and the witty sophistication of Edo’s urban culture.”³⁶ Born in a *samurai* family, Hōitsu spent years living in Kyoto where he studied painting styles of the Kanō school, the Maruyama school, and the Nanga school before devoting himself to Rimpa. He made tremendous efforts to revive Kōrin’s painting style, even conducting a personal study of Kōrin’s oeuvre. Hōitsu painted his own rendition (Figure 11 and 12) of Kōrin’s *Iris*es (Figure 3 and 4), making innovations to the design by rendering the flowers smaller to prioritize *ma* or negative space. He added color variations by painting some of the irises blue violet and some of them white but still arranged the clusters in a manner that harkened to Kōrin’s original. Hōitsu revived other themes popularized by Kōrin including *Wind God and Thunder God* (Figure 13), a reproduction of Kōrin’s (Figure 8), which in turn was a copy of Sōtatsu’s (Figure 7). Unlike prior versions of this painting Hōitsu painted a scene of seasonal plants with a river known as *Flowering Plants of Summer and Autumn* (Figure 14 and 15) on the reverse side of his *Wind God and Thunder God* painting. From a utilitarian perspective, having two different images on opposite sides of the folding screens allowed its owner to select the style that best fits the purpose and occasion of its use.

In the late 19th century, *Kōrin Zuan*, a compilation of Kōrin’s iconic design motifs was published and extensively studied by artists practicing Rimpa and other painting styles. Like woodblock print artists, Rimpa artists frequently collaborated with business owners to produce

³⁴ Yamane Yūzō, M. Naito, and T. Clark, *Rimpa Art*, London: British Museum Press (1998), 44.

³⁵ Nakamichi, “The Patrons of Tawaraya Sōtatsu and Ogata Kōrin,” 93.

³⁶ Khanh Trinh, *Kamisaka Sekka*, London: Prestel (2012), 52.

print materials including books displaying new fabric prints for *kimono*. These mass-produced, woodblock-printed books served as pattern and design guides and promoted the adoption of Rimpa motifs. It was primarily by such easily transferrable means that Rimpa's popularity grew and flourished.

Unlike Kōrin, much was unknown about Sōtatsu's identity, and it is highly probable that Hōitsu's fixation on Kōrin was due to his unawareness of Sōtatsu. Despite recognition as a co-founder of the design movement that would become known as "Rimpa," the absence of Sōtatsu's name on a map documenting the artists and craftsmen working in Kōetsu Village, founded in 1615, suggested that this marked the time when he ceased collaborating with Kōetsu in an attempt to position himself as an independent artist.³⁷ Despite his immense popularity from the Meiji Period (1868-1912) onward, information on Sōtatsu during the later Edo period was scarce. Some scholars even entertained the idea that Sōtatsu and Kōetsu could be the same person due to their closely interwoven lives.³⁸ Due to the inconsistency of information available and the temporal disparity, it is reasonable to believe that Hōitsu was unaware of Sōtatsu's existence and the influence he impressed upon Kōrin.³⁹

Suzuki Kiitsu, a later Edo period artist and student of Hōitsu, furthered the initiatives of his teacher and concentrated on the design and decorative aspects of Rimpa painting. Both artists were interested in revitalizing the sophisticated look of Heian period art without embedding any literary references into their work. In Kiitsu's *Morning Glories* (Figure 16 and 17), cascading vines rhythmically spread out across two six-panel folding screens. With the two screens placed next to one another, the viewer's gaze moves from one gold-leafed surface to the other, tracing the patterns of the blue violet morning glories in bloom, as they emerge between

³⁷ Yamane, *Rimpa Art*, 19.

³⁸ Mizuo Hiroshi, *Edo Painting: Sotatsu and Korin*, trans. John M. Shields, New York: Weatherhill/Heibonsha, 1978.

³⁹ Tamamushi, "Tawaraya Sōtatsu and the *Yamato-e* Revival," 72.

the lush green leaves. Additionally, the arrangement of color and forms are stylized in a way that is reminiscent of earlier Rimpa paintings, Kōrin's *Iris*es (Figure 3 and 4) and Hōitsu's *Iris*es (Figure 11 and 12). While employing a similar color scheme, Kiitsu made a design choice to paint morning glories and created an original painting for Edo Rimpa that is free from any literary reference to the *Tale of Ise*.

Like his teacher Hōitsu, Kiitsu painted the famous *Wind God and Thunder God* (Figure 18 and 19) on a silk surface affixed to a pair of four-panel sliding doors instead of the paper surfaced two-panel folding screens medium used by his predecessors. His choice of silk as a medium may be attributed to his interest in textile design. Deviating from the style put forth by Sōtatsu (Figure 7) and followed quite faithfully by Kōrin (Figure 8) and Hōitsu (Figure 13), Kiitsu renders the two deities to appear almost translucent. In the absence of saturated color, he places more emphasis on brush technique evidenced in his application of shading on the folds of their torsos, muscles on the arms and legs, allowing him to depict more depth and dimension to the deities.⁴⁰ The clouds and wind, rendered in black sumi ink, are painted in a way that radiates out the shape of their bodies and reflects their direction of movement through the space. The Wind God and Thunder God aren't riding on the clouds because Kiitsu has, in a way, rendered the clouds to appear as extensions of the deities themselves.

Although Edo Rimpa stripped Rimpa of its connection with Heian period literature, exhibiting proficiency in painting techniques was still a priority for these artists. In his painting *Camellias* (Figure 20), Kiitsu demonstrated his proficiency of Rimpa techniques like *tarashikomi* by applying it to render crystalline textures on the leaves of the camellia flowers (Figure 21). He does this in a more nuanced way in *Flowering Plum and Camellia* (Figure 22) through subtle applications onto the trunk and on the twisting branches of the plum tree. Despite its separation into two localized artistic practices Kyo Rimpa and Edo Rimpa, Rimpa

⁴⁰ "Sliding Door with Design of Wind God and Thunder God," Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, https://www.fujibi.or.jp/en/our-collection/profile-of-works.html?work_id=3557 (accessed Jan. 2, 2021).

continued to appeal to artists and designers through Japan's transition from feudal governance into its establishment as a modern nation-state following the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

Reverse Importation and Western Influence on Rimpa's Canonization

Beginning in the late 19th century, Japan's period of modernization was epochal, marking a pivotal point in defining Japanese art as it is understood today. It was during this historical period that the term "Rimpa" was officially coined, brought upon by an urgency to standardize the movement's name due to the increasing recognition of Kōrin's paintings as a major influence on Western decorative and modern art movements Japonisme and Art Nouveau. Prior to the formal establishment of the term "Rimpa," this style was referred to by several monikers including "Kōetsu school" (Kōetsu-ha), "Sōtatsu-Kōrin-school" (Sōtatsu -Kōrin-ha), and even described as "in the style of Kōrin" (Rinpu).⁴¹ Artists active in the Edo period who followed in the aesthetic trend set forth by Kōetsu and Sōtatsu were plentiful, but in the creation of Rimpa's lineage of artists, only a select few were included.⁴² The term lineage is used loosely in that these were the artists whose work received canonical status, leading to their status as representatives of the movement. This initiative established Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558-1637) and Tawaraya Sōtatsu (active c. 1600-1640) as progenitors of Rimpa and consecrated Sōtatsu's student Kitagawa Sōsetsu, brothers Ogata Kōrin (1658-1716) and Ogata Kenzan (1663-1743), Nakamura Hōchū (active 1790-1819), Sakai Hōitsu (1761-1828), and Suzuki Kiitsu (1796-1858) within its legacy.

Following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan set itself on a rapid path to westernize and modernize. This period marked the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate government by reinstating the Emperor as the head of state. The imperial family was relocated from Kyoto to Tokyo, the new name to replace "Edo," the name of the military capital where the Shogun

⁴¹ Tamamushi Satoko, *Ikitsuzukeru kōrin: imeeji no gensetsu o hakobu norimono to sono kiseki* (The Living Korin), Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan (2004), 110-111.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 111-114.

resided. In 1871, the Meiji government executed the Iwakura Mission, which sent some of the most powerful individuals involved in the Meiji Restoration on a two-year study tour to investigate Western sciences, technologies, industry, political, and economic systems in Europe and the United States. The findings of the mission were essential in establishing a strategy in which Japan could successfully transform itself into a modern nation. Universities, based on Western models were established in the 1870s and experts from the West were invited to come to Japan and act as instructors in their respective expertise. By sending their scholars abroad and inviting Western experts, like American art historian Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908), to teach at its newly established universities, Japan absorbed a plethora of ideas. Foreigners like Fenollosa joined Japanese groups with traditionalist mindsets to influence cultural reforms and launch initiatives to preserve and elevate what they deemed admirable about Japan's culture.⁴³

What we recognize today as Japanese art history is the result of assimilating Western ideals with the existing Japanese culture and premodern aesthetics. Western practices were selectively integrated and used to recast the culture of the past.⁴⁴ Adapted from German art historian Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History*, the notion of classicism in painting was integral to the development of the newly constructed analysis of Japan's art history.⁴⁵ This assisted in the establishment of a canon and determined the method for evaluating aesthetic quality for future generations of artists. In regard to the realm of art, the most significant development was the introduction of the concept of fine art or *bijutsu*.⁴⁶ Prior to the Meiji period differentiating objects as either art or craft was not a priority but with Japan's increasing participation in

⁴³ Chelsea Foxwell, "Japan as Museum? Encapsulating Change and Loss in Late-Nineteenth Century Japan," *Getty Research Journal*, no. 1 (2009), 40.

⁴⁴ Christine M.E Guth, "Japan 1868-1945: Art, Architecture, and National Identity," *Art Journal*, vol. 55, no. 3 (Autumn 1996), 17.

⁴⁵ Lillehoj, "Introduction," 4.

⁴⁶ The word *bijutsu* itself came to use in the late 19th century and is written with the Chinese characters that translate to "beautiful technique." Ironically, after its invention in Japan, the coined term "bijutsu" is exported to China.

international exhibitions, the need to define a master narrative that was capable of representing Japan as a modern nation became apparent in order to distinguish itself as a world power.⁴⁷ In response, objects were divided into categories as either “pure art and high art,” which included painting and sculpture, and “industrial art, decorative art, and applied art.”⁴⁸

Japanese scholars introduced and pushed for the establishment of domestic painting exhibitions akin to the French salon in Paris. The purpose of the salon was to exhibit “national paintings” with the objective of being acquired by a patron or institution’s collection and historicized into France’s art historical narrative. National exhibitions in Japan took on similar objectives as they were organized around the “assumption that it was the state’s responsibility to promote high culture so as to shape public taste and enhance Japan’s international prestige.”⁴⁹ In addition to painting salons, they advocated for Japan’s participation in world expositions as a necessary demonstration of the new nation’s progress and modernization. Alongside exhibiting goods to an international audience, Japan saw the opportunity to demonstrate Japanese carpentry skills through the construction of freestanding structures like the Japanese Phoenix Pavilion (Figure 23) which was exhibited at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago, Illinois.

Japan’s active participation in international exhibitions helped fuel desire for and increased exportation of goods like woodblock prints, folding screens, lacquer ware, and metal work. This brought upon “Japonisme,” the Western craze for all things Japanese in art centers like Paris, in response to which the Japanese arts industry ramped up production of goods that

⁴⁷ Penelope Harvey’s article “Nations on Display: Technology and Culture in Expo ‘92” acknowledges that world fairs and expos serve the same function that museums do. She writes that the world’s fairs “[display] the peculiar preoccupation of modern Western societies with mastering ‘objects of knowledge’, and then publicly commemorating the victory by putting them on show.” Penelope Harvey, “Nations on Display: Technology and Culture in Expo ‘92,” in *The Politics of Display*, ed. Sharon Macdonald, 85-105, London: Routledge, 1997.

⁴⁸ Tamamushi, *Ikitsuzukeru kōrin: imeeji no gensetsu o hakobu norimono to sono kiseki* (The Living Korin), 60.

⁴⁹ Guth, “Japan 1868-1945: Art, Architecture, and National Identity,” 18.

fit this aesthetic.⁵⁰ Along with the visual tropes put forward by the dissemination of Japanese woodblock prints such as Katsushika Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (Figure 24), objects bearing Rimpa designs also became representative of Japanese art in the west. Rimpa works made for export were produced to appeal to the tastes of Western consumers as they desired objects that reflected opulent, exotic, and "oriental" aesthetics, while domestically sold goods were, by comparison, much subtler in appearance.

Through increased trade relations with the West, Rimpa goods became highly acclaimed among fine art collectors as well as intellectual circles. For instance, objects depicted in French modernist painter Édouard Manet (1832-1883)'s *Portrait of Émile Zola* (Figure 25) include Rimpa-like folding screens and woodblock prints adorning Zola's interior space. This inclusion is significant as it served as visual evidence of Rimpa works in European material culture and the influence of Japonisme on modern thinkers and the cultural elite. Admiration for Rimpa and Kōrin's unique design sensibilities were written about by influential Western art writers including French art collector Louis Gonse and British art critic William Anderson. Gonse was credited to have written the first survey on Japanese art, *L'art Japon* (Figure 26), which was published in his native language French.⁵¹ This book featured passages on Kōrin, Rimpa, and the trend Japonisme and was influential in assuring Rimpa's ascension into canonization.

Anderson's writings on Japanese fine and industrial arts culminated in his book *The Pictorial Arts of Japan* (Figure 27) in which he showered praise on Gonse's extensive writings on Kōrin. Western observations on Rimpa's decorative qualities were internalized by modern Japanese scholars and further elaborated and emphasized in their writings on Sōtatsu and Kōrin, which

⁵⁰ Foxwell, "Japan as Museum? Encapsulating Change and Loss in Late-Nineteenth Century Japan," 45.

⁵¹ Tamamushi, *Ikitsuzukeru kōrin: imeeji no gensetsu o hakobu norimono to sono kiseki* (The Living Korin), 54-56.

signaled a departure from the approach taken earlier by Edo period scholars who evaluated Rimpa in contrast with their Chinese-style painting school contemporaries.⁵²

After successful exhibitions of Kōrin's work in Europe, the exhibited pieces returned to Japan between 1896 and 1898 to a proud, adoring audience. The public was kept up to date with the traveling works and their reception through wide media coverage of the international showings as well as its influence on Western modern art. Known as reverse importation, this describes the event where an artist or artwork leaves Japan, and only when acclamation is earned abroad then the artist is able to leverage traction and influence at home.

From the turn of the 19th century to the early 20th century, Japan's quest to rapidly modernize led to the importation and haphazard adaptation of Western concepts into existing structures and systems. These adaptations included the establishment of institutions such as universities and museums to disseminate knowledge that supported a unified cultural identity and national art history. There was a boom in the establishment of national museums, an institution necessary for signifying an emerging nation-state's ascent to modernity. The museum itself was a political tool that functioned as a venue to disseminate a constructed narrative of a nation and its culture. According to sociologist Tony Bennett, "the enlistment of the institutions and practices of high culture for governmental purposes was similarly aimed at producing a better economy of cultural power."⁵³ He went as far as aligning the museum with disciplinary intuitions as they are both intended to function as places to educate the public. The understanding of the museum as both a repository of culture and an educational institution reinforces the belief that the objects put on display are of significant value to the culture and ideas it represents, while those that were not included were assumed to be inferior.

On modern-era museum displays and education, museum studies and education expert Eileen Hooper-Greenhill wrote, "Within museums, the phenomenon of display (or of exhibition)

⁵² Nakamichi, "The Patrons of Tawaraya Sōtatsu and Ogata Kōrin," 80.

⁵³ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, London: Routledge (1995), 23.

is the major form of pedagogy. It is the experience of the displays that for most visitors defines the museum, and it is through displays that museums produce and communicate knowledge.”⁵⁴ The public, as visitors to the museum, accept the lessons on cultural hegemony delivered in these exhibitions. Hooper-Greenhill states “at the national level, museums were signs of the secular religion of nationalism, indices of taste and level of civilization as well as markers of the responsibility of the state towards those for whom it was gradually becoming more responsible.”⁵⁵ Additionally, art historian Carol Duncan acknowledged the museum as a functioning political tool that symbolizes a society’s values and beliefs and the need to construct a master narrative is a typical phenomenon that occurs in a country’s modernizing stage.⁵⁶ This was the cultural and political environment that Japan faced during the Meiji Restoration in the late 19th century.

The Meiji government’s mission to construct a “unified sense of the past” through the invention and recontextualization of Japan’s artistic practices spread from the nation’s center in Tokyo throughout the country. This included an investigation of past artistic practices that would emphasize a common cultural heritage. This movement saw the removal of spiritual and religious contexts from Buddhist statues and painted works and placed more emphasis on its value as art objects rather than venerated icons. Individuals like Fenollosa, his student Okakura Tenshin (1863-1913), and art historian Fukui Rikichiro (1886-1972) wrote extensively about the framework of Japanese art history with the latter presenting a comprehensive thesis that the culture of the Momoyama (1573-1600 or 1615) as comparative to the culture of the European

⁵⁴ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*. London: Routledge (2000), 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁶ Carol Duncan, “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and S.D. Lavine, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press (1991), 88-90.

Renaissance.⁵⁷ At this time, woodblock prints became associated with Japan's Edo (Tokyo) region, while Rimpa became synonymous with Kyoto due to its connection with Heian period culture and within this discourse, Sōtatsu and Kōrin were positioned as practitioners of this classical revival of *yamato-e* or Japanese style paintings.⁵⁸ Art historian Christine Guth indicated that this influenced the artistic innovations happening in Kyoto and led to it being “officially defined and confined by its cultural heritage.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, educational materials, like Okakura's government-sponsored academic journal *Kokka*, assisted in perpetuating cultural hegemony. This immense drive to establish a classic style of art was propelled by the Meiji government's desire to establish itself as an equal to the imperial powers of the West. These efforts underplayed the agenda of influential figures like Fenollosa, Okakura, and Fukui who were tasked with constructing a vigorous art history for the new nation of Japan.

The modern period's repositioning of Rimpa as a premodern school of painting was detrimental as it negates its prior existence as a design movement that vastly expanded beyond two-dimensional painted works. Neglecting to look at Rimpa through “the period eye,” most 20th century scholarship amplified Rimpa as a cultural renaissance movement without fully examining the social conditions of a work's production to ensure that interpretations were not ahistorically imposed. Propagating that myth codified Rimpa as a Japanese painting genre for the sake of nation building and nullifies its origins as a multimedia creative practice.

Rematerializing and Reconsuming Rimpa

In addition to its significance in constructing Japan's art history and cultural identity, Rimpa was absorbed into Japan's developing consumer culture as evidenced by its adoption into

⁵⁷ Tamamushi, “Tawaraya Sōtatsu and the *Yamato-e* Revival,” 73.

⁵⁸ Nakamichi, “The Patrons of Tawaraya Sōtatsu and Ogata Kōrin,” 78.

⁵⁹ Guth, “Japan 1868-1945: Art, Architecture, and National Identity,” 18.

commercial goods and advertising by a new generation of Rimpa artists. The department store was another imported Western institution that became a venue for arts and cultural exchange like the museum. Vast halls were designed to host rotating and traveling exhibitions, with many spaces functioning as rental galleries, giving their organizers full agency in coordinating exhibitions. Comparing the museum with the department store, Tony Bennett mentioned similarities in their origins as “formally open spaces allowing entry to the general public, intended to function as spaces of emulation, places for mimetic practices whereby improving tastes, values and norms of conduct were to be more broadly diffused through society.”⁶⁰ The department stores became “arbiters of the nation’s fashion and customs”⁶¹ as they established themselves in the position to offer status, prestige, and respectability as museums to its consumers. Anthropologist Millie Creighton summarizes the role department stores played in shaping modern Japan’s culture:

Department stores in Japan thus serve both as ‘models of’ and ‘models for’ Japanese culture. To the extent they reflect values, social relationships, expected behavior for individuals in various roles, etc. they may be considered ‘models’ of Japanese culture, serving as a nexus where social values come together, and are packaged and wrapped for distribution to a consuming public. They do not just reflect, and perpetuate culture, as ‘models for’ they also have a major role in *creating* culture.⁶²

Impressing upon the public ideas of Japanese cultural identity, the department store looked to Japan’s recently consecrated art history to increase its own sales and promotional efforts. Catering to the tastes and desires of the rising urban middle class, department stores partnered with contemporary artists to produce works to decorate the homes of their clientele. As new houses were built with *tokōnoma*, an alcove and architectural design feature that was reserved for the domestic dwellings of the elite, customers desired art to decorate this new

⁶⁰ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, 39.

⁶¹ Millie Creighton, “Maintaining Cultural Boundaries in Retailing: How Japanese Department Stores Domesticize ‘Things Foreign,’” in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4 (Oct. 1991), 677.

⁶² *Ibid.*

space.⁶³ Again, these items functioned as symbolic goods used to signify upward mobility and department stores became the destination to acquire cultural capital through the purchase of art.

Tamamushi Satoko's research points to Rimpa's revival in the early 20th century through activities connected to Mitsukoshi, a department store headquartered in Tokyo. These activities began in the Taishō Era (1912-1926) known as the golden age of *kimono*. Rapid societal changes greatly affected the standards of dress and sales of *kimono* and Japanese traditional textiles declined as preferences switched over to western-style clothing. To promote *kimono* sales, Mitsukoshi launched a textile design contest with a call to action for designers to submit Kōrin-esque print designs. This marketing promotion led to the influx of modernized Rimpa designs. Design motifs from *Kōrin Zuan* were co-opted by Mitsukoshi to promote their new modern line of *kimono*. The timing of this contest was aligned to commemorate Kōrin's 200th year death anniversary and Mitsukoshi organized an exhibition of works by Rimpa artists including Kōrin, Sōtatsu, Kōetsu, and Hōitsu in tandem with the textile design contest.⁶⁴

This Rimpa exhibition at Mitsukoshi marked the first time the modern public had access to view these works. Recognizing the gap in knowledge of the artists, publishing companies began producing volumes of books that introduced color plate photographs of Rimpa artworks alongside interpretative text. These publications provided readers with a wealth of information on the hierarchy of Rimpa practitioners with a focus on building the mythologies of its three biggest artists: Sōtatsu, Kōrin, and Hōitsu. Additionally, department store exhibitions like the one held at Mitsukoshi received sponsorship and media support from Japan's leading newspapers. Decades later, television specials such as NHK's "Nichiyo Bijutsukan" (Sunday Art

⁶³ Younjung Oh, "Shopping for Art: The New Middle Class' Art Consumption in Modern Japanese Department Stores," *Journal of Design History*, vol. 27 (Jan. 2014), 351.

⁶⁴ Tamamushi, *Ikitsuzukeru kōrin: imeeji no gensetsu o hakobu norimono to sono kiseki* (The Living Korin), 78-86.

Museum) featuring current exhibitions would be produced on this premise of educating the public about art.

Although she doesn't explicitly use the term "art worlds,"⁶⁵ Tamamushi alluded to the existence of an organizational network that served to valorize Rimpa, such as the case of a group of businessmen who invested in the scholarship of Sōtatsu to legitimize his works that were in their private collections.⁶⁶ As a result of the collective efforts of Mitsukoshi and the media, Kōrin came to be regarded as a legendary figure to the public. To express gratitude for the enormous increases in sales that Mitsukoshi received, the department store purchased a new tombstone for Kōrin's burial site at his family temple Myokenji in Kyoto and held ceremonies each year on June 2nd, the day Kōrin was believed to have passed. Tracing Rimpa's presence in consumer activities surfaces new understanding of the relationships of 20th century department stores and modern artists like Kamisaka Sekka (1866-1942), who like many other artists at the time collaborated with Mitsukoshi and other department stores on the production of commercial goods in his modern Rimpa aesthetic.⁶⁷

Kamisaka Sekka's woodblock prints exemplified Rimpa's entrance into the realm of modernism through adapting its imagery into abstract designs and simplified forms. Born in Kyoto where he trained as a painter, Sekka revamped Rimpa to align with the visual culture of his time. He spent time in Europe studying Western-style painting and was exposed to the popularity of and demand for Japonisme. This led him to study Kōrin's catalog of works and integrate themes and motifs into his creative practice.

⁶⁵ *Art Worlds* written by sociologist Howard S. Becker is an investigation of art world professions that work together on initiatives to keep the industry moving. Becker's discussions on artists, critics, academics, private enterprise, patrons, and other various at world players inspired a reflection and me to identify those responsible for promoting Rimpa. Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008.

⁶⁶ Tamamushi, *Ikitsuzukeru kōrin: imeeji no gensetsu o hakobu norimono to sono kiseki* (The Living Korin), 78-86.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

In the pair of folding-screen paintings titled *Iris* (Figures 28 and 29), Sekka reproduced Kōrin's famous *Irises* (Figures 3 and 4) painting. He used Kōrin's method of staggering the stalks of the irises to indicate the presence of the eight-planked bridge. Sekka's proficiency with painting techniques often used by Rimpa artists, such as *mokkotsu*,⁶⁸ is demonstrated by an opaque layering of pigments that removed any trace of an outline. In contrast, the woodblock print *Eight-Planked Bridge* (Figure 30) demonstrated the creative liberties taken to reinterpret Kōrin's *Irises at Yatsunashi* (Figure 1 and 2). In this print, Sekka included the famous bridge rendered through strokes of water-based black ink. It appears as if drops of water were applied to areas of the bridge creating a wet, reflective quality and hinting at an updated use of the *tarashikomi* technique. In the foreground of the composition are flattened green and violet nebulous forms layered on top of the other. Tracing the zig-zagging configuration of the violet petals as they overlap the green flower stalks hints to the typical staggered arrangement of the irises in earlier paintings. Compared to the screen paintings *Iris* (Figures 28 and 29), this print served as a clear departure and signified a new abstract way of visualizing Rimpa.

Willow and Cherry Branches (Figure 31) is a more recognizably Rimpa work due to its gold surface and with its draping willow branches and flowering cherry blossom. The placement of cherry blossoms can be likened to a pattern of a *kimono* and the branches are rendered with unnatural bends and curves. To recreate the effect of *tarashikomi*, Sekka applied several blots of teal pigment to indicate the appearance of lichen growing on the larger branches. In designing an untitled print (Figure 32) depicting floral subjects, he left empty, unpainted spaces to form silhouettes of flowers by creating the impression that the lines and forms were carved from the colored surface.

Sekka relied on the viewers knowledge of Japanese art in his woodblock print *Fuji* (Figure 33), in which he filled the composition with a crescent-shaped wave that is outlined in silver

⁶⁸ The technique *mokkotsu* is a painting technique in which objects are rendered without using outlines or with outlines covered by pigment.

with its interior left white and unfilled. The wave is overlaid on a dimly colored full moon. Despite the print's title, Mt. Fuji is not visually represented in the composition, but its presence is hinted at by the mimicry of Sekka's wave conjuring the image of Hokusai's woodblock print *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (Figure 24), which itself has become a globally recognized and iconic graphic image since it was first printed in 1831.⁶⁹ As displayed in his *Eight-Planked Bridge* print (Figure 30), this playful way of referencing artworks of Japan's past speaks to Sekka's proficiency of Rimpa and its inherent tendencies to adapt to the material techniques of the present while maintaining a visual connection to the past.

From the 20th century, there was a deep interest in connecting contemporary graphic design with Rimpa as a source of influence.⁷⁰ Like Sekka, graphic designer Tanaka Ikkō (1930-2002) was knowledgeable of Japanese art history and its canonized works. Born in Nara, he grew up admiring Kyoto's classical culture and adapted themes and design elements into his commercial design work. As an art director, he referenced the visual culture of the Edo period and looked to books on Kōrin's, Kenzan's, and Hōitsu's work for inspiration.⁷¹ In his poster *Japan* (Figure 34), a chocolate brown deer stands at the center of an orange-colored plane with its back curved and head shown in profile and nose pointed down. Ikkō directly lifted his deer's pose from the 12th century handscroll *Heike Nokyō* (Figure 35) that Sōtatsu was credited to have restored in the 17th century,⁷² which featured a deer in the same pose. In Ikkō's poster, he dotted the deer's back and rump with eleven white circles. Its ears are rendered with two semi-circles in a lightened shade of brown to contrast with its body and its face has one black diamond-shaped

⁶⁹ Christine M.E. Guth, "The Local and the Global: Hokusai's Great Wave in Contemporary Product Design," *Design Issues*, vol. 28, no. 2 (Spring 2012), 28.

⁷⁰ Tamamushi Satoko, "Rimpa to dezain, sōshoku, kazari (Rimpa and Design, Ornament, Decoration)," *Nihon no bijutsu*, no. 464, Tokyo: Shibundo (2005), 19.

⁷¹ Kōno Motoaki, *Nenpu de tadoru: Rinpa yonhyakunen* (Following the Chronology of Rimpa's 400 Years), Kyoto: Tankosha (2015), 107.

⁷² Tamamushi, "Tawaraya Sōtatsu and the *Yamato-e* Revival," 54.

eye. Floating above the deer is the word “JAPAN” written in multicolored sans-serif, all caps type emphasizing this marriage of an antiquated cultural image with a contemporary Japanese national identity.

The poster *Ikenobo Sensei’s Flower Arrangement Exhibit at Matsuzakaya Department Store* (Figure 36) revealed Ikkō’s knowledge of Edo Rimpa painters Hōitsu and Kiitsu and his ability to remix elements from their work. The purple-colored area in the upper right corner of the composition is reminiscent of Hōitsu’s meandering river in *Flowering Plants of Summer and Autumn* (Figures 14 and 15). The massive green mound that dominates the composition seems to reference Kiitsu’s *Camellias* (Figure 20) painting. Layered on top of the round green-colored form is a monochromatic illustration of what resembles dandelions and tall grass. The dandelions and grass appear to reach toward the purple river-like form which is similarly arranged as the plant life appearing in Hōitsu’s painting *Flowering Plants of Summer and Autumn* (Figures 14 and 15).

Drawing again upon meandering rivers as a motif, Ikkō’s *Music Today ’85* poster (Figure 37) depicts an opaque black river that extends from the center left of the composition and flows toward the bottom right. Instead of decorating the river with stylized patterns of water to give a sense of movement, Ikkō embellished the black surface with multicolored straight, curved, and jagged lines with some resembling amalgamated letters of the alphabet. This unexpected approach combined Ikkō’s knowledge of typography and color to create an elegant reimagining of a river in motion.

The simplified forms in the graphic poster *Ikko Tanaka Graphic Art Exhibition* (Figure 38) builds off Sekka’s abstraction of irises in his woodblock print *Eight-Planked Bridge* (Figure 30). This rough and abstract rendering of the iris is a rejection of the more elegant representations of irises painted by Kōrin, Hōitsu, and Sekka. In Ikkō’s composition he stripped down the visual elements of the iris into its most simple form. It is as if he cut five pieces from colored paper and positioned them to create the shape of a single iris in bloom with violet and

brown to form the petals. Slightly varying tones of green were used to create depth and differentiation between the leaves and stem of the flower.

Ikkō's modification of classical motifs driven by his adherence to modernist design principles succeeded in bringing Rimpa into the late 20th century visual culture. This is best exemplified in his larger-than-life installation titled *Purple Iris* (Figure 39) at Narita International Airport. Rather than replicate the stripped-down approach seen earlier, he opted to produce a more quintessential Rimpa appearance with its gold surface, opaque application of color, and sensual forms. He augmented the perspective of the typical iris painting by cropping out everything but one flowering iris that is overlapped by a closed bud.

This discussion on Sekka and Ikkō and their contributions to the visual styles of Rimpa urged a reclamation of its history as a multimedia design movement and evolving creative practice. This penchant for connecting with the visual culture of the past and translating imagery to fit the aesthetic priorities of the present is what Sekka and Ikkō both excelled at and led to Rimpa's continued relevancy as a creative practice.

Three epochal moments in Rimpa's history were monumental in the eventual surfacing of Rimpa's soft power in the 21st century. The first moment occurred in the Edo period when Rimpa, as a style of painting, is brought from Kyoto to the city of Edo (now Tokyo). This transition brought upon the localization of Rimpa, and the introduction of new themes and subjects detached from the former practice of referencing court literature and themes that were of geographic significance to Kyoto. The second transformation looked at Western influence on Rimpa and summarized events that led to the acceptance and elevation of Rimpa's status in Japan, with emphasis on its relation to Western modern art movements and adoration by Western tastemakers and art collectors. Lastly, the third development was the integration of modern materials to create new forms and contexts of Rimpa images by Sekka and Ikkō with the venue of the department store and commercial enterprises shaping and supporting new stylistic approaches and media. Each of these three developments were significant in expanding the

conceptual understanding of Rimpa, and integral to the recent adaptations and manifestations experienced in 2015.

Chapter Three: 2015 Revival of Rimpa on Kyoto's Cultural Landscape

The years 2014 and 2015 witnessed waves of cultural spaces hosting Rimpa exhibitions. Concurrent exhibitions of Rimpa and Rimpa-themed works were held across Japan in national institutions, private museums, and nationwide department stores. Events included a devoted area showcasing Rimpa-influenced contemporary art at that year's Tokyo Art Fair, an exhibition of Rimpa-inspired *manga* and *anime* at the Kyoto International Manga Museum, and a traveling exhibition of selected works of the Hosomi Museum held at Takashimaya department stores. Additionally, a municipal-sponsored festival was held in Kyoto throughout the entire year of 2015. However, rather than recognizing the individual artist Ogata Kōrin like some of the larger shows in the Tokyo area, the "RIMPA 400 Years Commemoration Festival" (Figure 40) hereafter "RIMPA 400," celebrated the 400th year anniversary of Rimpa's first emergence in Kyoto.⁷³ Notably, publicity for exhibitions at Tokyo-area institutions like the MOA Atami Museum of Art (Figure 41) and Nezu Museum of Art (Figure 42) communicated that their exhibitions commemorated the 300th death anniversary of Kōrin. In a manner that builds on and simultaneously detracts from the promotional efforts put forth in Kyoto, museums in the Tokyo vicinity rallied around the death of Kōrin, making no mention of the quadricentennial of Rimpa or Kyoto's role as the site of its emergence.

This investigation documents a recent manifestation that I have coined as "Local Rimpa," adopting and integrating cultural studies theorist Stuart Hall's concepts on identity as a constructive process that is never complete and always in flux. Vast amounts of ideological work is undertaken every day to construct, disseminate, and maintain what becomes recognizable and representative of identity.⁷⁴ In accordance with Hall's ideas, the orchestration of these Rimpa-

⁷³ As described in the previous chapters and to be discussed further in this chapter, Rimpa has experienced many moments of resurface over time since its initial founding in Kyoto in the 17th century.

⁷⁴ Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity?'" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 1-17, London: SAGE Publications (1996), 2.

related exhibitions and events reiterates an ideology that speaks to Japanese cultural identity, however, the discrepancy in its regional messaging seems to reveal ongoing tensions between Kyoto and Tokyo in respect to the stewardship of Rimpa. In fact, this conflict is reminiscent of when Rimpa was brought to Edo (Tokyo), which prompted the term “Edo Rimpa” to be used to differentiate artworks made there from Kyoto’s “Kyo Rimpa,” thus, placing great emphasis on the geographic locations in which the art movement was practiced.

This chapter explores Rimpa’s revival in 2015 as a public reassertion of Kyoto’s local identity while positioning RIMPA 400 as an event that appropriates the community-based urban planning practice known as *machizukuri*. *Machizukuri* adopts a grassroots approach to revitalizing communities and activating civic spaces through the combined effort of citizens and community groups. This practice emerged to address policies that historically prioritized investing in economic development over “urban quality of life.”⁷⁵

Cities are acknowledged as the “epicenter of soft power” as drivers of global economic growth and urban areas are taking opportunities to improve their image.⁷⁶ Identified as a useful concept in understanding cultural heritage politics, soft power is significant in framing this art historical research on the sociopolitical aspects of Rimpa. Political analyst Joseph S. Nye coined the term “soft power” to describe the non-coercive influence of culture and ideology on behavior in international diplomacy.⁷⁷ The concept of soft power is typically evoked in discussions regarding the Japanese government-initiated campaign “Cool Japan,” which was launched in the mid-2000s to promote Japanese popular culture industries such as *anime* and *manga* abroad. However, scholars like Mitsui Hideki recognized Rimpa’s soft power capabilities in his

⁷⁵ André Sorenson, H. Koizumi, and A. Miyamoto, “*Machizukuri*, Civil Society, and Community Space in Japan,” in *The Politics of Civic Space in Asia: Building Urban Communities*, ed. Amrita Daniere and M. Douglas, 33-50, London: Routledge (2008), 35.

⁷⁶ Javier Jimenez, “The Economics of Museums and Cities,” in *Cities, Museums and Soft Power*, ed. Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg, 29-48, Washington, DC: The AAM Press (2015), 30.

⁷⁷ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: PublicAffairs, 2004.

observations of efforts linking the art movement with contemporary popular visual culture, eventually subsuming it as part of the “Cool Japan” movement.⁷⁸

The Kyoto Convention Bureau marked the year 2015 as the 400th anniversary of Rimpa’s emergence in Kyoto.⁷⁹ During this time, museums, department stores, and art galleries played host to special exhibitions featuring the genre’s highly illustrious works by prolific Rimpa artists; Sōtatsu, Kōrin, Hōitsu, and Sekka. These exhibitions and events belonged to a series of celebrations marketed as RIMPA 400. RIMPA 400 made visible the city’s historical significance as the site where the art movement emerged and flourished.

RIMPA 400 was organized by the Kyoto Convention Bureau, the role of which is to promote the culture of Kyoto, and led by Yamamoto Sōta, RIMPA 400’s General Producer.⁸⁰ According to Yamamoto, the main objective of RIMPA 400 was to promote Kyoto’s cultural identity by reintroducing Rimpa to Kyoto’s citizens and its visitors from across the world. Planning began in 2012 when the Kyoto Chamber of Commerce first recognized the opportunity to stage a massive celebration for the 400th anniversary of Rimpa. Organizers had to recognize opportunities where RIMPA 400 could overcome challenges of the “attention economy.”⁸¹ Political analyst Sugiura Tsutomu recommended that to stand out from competing distractions, organizations take on promotional strategies like demonstrations, exhibitions, and staged

⁷⁸ Mitsui Hideki, *Rinpa no dezaingaku* (Design School of Rimpa), Tokyo: NHK Books (2013), 241.

⁷⁹ The founding of Kōetsu Village in 1615 allows the identification of the year 2015 as Rimpa’s 400th anniversary, which in turn leads to its official celebration, RIMPA 400.

⁸⁰ Yamamoto is a former Bureau Chief of Kyoto’s NHK office. Despite retiring from NHK more than 10 years ago, he remained involved with event organization and promotional activities. Since 2014, Yamamoto served as RIMPA 400’s General Producer and managed the events and programming carried out through the year. In addition to overseeing the programs and events of RIMPA 400, Yamamoto is also the General Producer of the “Classics Day Committee,” which was inaugurated in 2007 to promote classical culture.

⁸¹ A term introduced by political analyst Sugiura Tsutomu to describe our current society that is oversaturated with distractions all competing for attention, which has undergone monetization in the age of information and content streaming. Sugiura Tsutomu, “Japan’s Creative Industries: Culture as a Source of Soft Power in the Industrial Sector,” in *Soft Power Superpowers*, ed. Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2008.

performances to draw maximum attention toward its brand, products, and services.⁸² For the organizers of RIMPA 400, they hoped that the festival's blockbuster exhibitions, innovative and creative public programs, and visual spectacles would draw the attention of and resonate with a 21st century audience.

With the cooperation of government entities, museums, universities, private industry, and the media, RIMPA 400 was able to have immeasurable reach. The motivation for RIMPA 400's primary stakeholders reflected the desire to promote awareness of Kyoto's heritage while simultaneously investing in its future economic and industrial growth. "RIMPA 400 is supported for its economic potential," explained Yamamoto. "The three entities pulled their resources together, poured it into RIMPA 400 as an investment for the future of Kyoto and its industries."⁸³ According to the festival's project plan (see appendix), RIMPA 400's Committee Representatives were Murata Junichi, Chairman of the Kyoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vice-President of The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Chairman of Murata Machinery, Ltd., an international textiles machinery corporation founded and based in Kyoto; Yamada Keiji, Kyoto Prefecture Governor; Kadokawa Daisaku, Kyoto City Mayor; Tateishi Yoshio, Kyoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry President. Support from a collective of arts, culture, and design leaders was garnered and these individuals were assembled into an advisory committee. Members included Kōno Motoaki, President of Kyoto University of Arts and Crafts; Koshino Junko, Fashion Designer; Takashina Shuji, Director of the Ohara Museum of Art; Tsuji Nobuo, Director of the Miho Museum; and Haga Toru, Director of the Shizuoka Prefectural Museum of Art. The inclusion of established and influential art world types helped validate the importance for this celebration while lending intellectual credibility.

⁸² Sugiura Tsutomu, "Japan's Creative Industries: Culture as a Source of Soft Power in the Industrial Sector," in *Soft Power Superpowers*, ed. Yasushi Watanabe and David L. McConnell, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. (2008), 129.

⁸³ Yamamoto Sōta, personal interview by Erika Enomoto, Kyoto, Japan (July 1, 2015).

Stimulating Kyoto's economy was the main objective of the RIMPA 400 campaign however, it was only one of four objectives as indicated in the RIMPA 400 Years Commemoration Festival Project Plan (see appendix) as follows:

- 1) Stimulate Kyoto's industry
- 2) Facilitate cultural exchange with the world
- 3) Encourage people to enjoy, learn, and be delighted by Rimpa
- 4) Discover new ideas from studying Japan's past.

To achieve these goals, a strategic plan was developed which documented the roles of the RIMPA 400 Committee along with the targeted key results for each supporting sector: industry and business, cultural institutions, academia, and media. The responsibilities were segmented for each industry belonging to the "RIMPA 400 Platform." At its core is the RIMPA 400 Committee in charge of advertising and organizing commemorative ceremonies and symposiums. The supporting sector "Industry and Business" identified new tourism product development, Kyoto cuisine and traditional sweets product development, and lifestyle product development as its key results. The "Culture" sector, which comprised the Classics Day project management office, owned planning and executing large-scale RIMPA 400 exhibitions and events. The "Academia and Research" sector was responsible for organizing the International Rimpa Design Symposium, Rimpa Design Competition, and the Forum on 21st Century Rimpa. Lastly, the "Information Transmission" sector managed media communications, which included coordinating special articles that appeared in publications, maintaining the RIMPA events website, and distributing information to partner organizations.

Through 2015, carefully articulated marketing campaigns delivered a cohesive message to attract audiences to engage with and participate in the RIMPA 400 festivities. They reframed Rimpa as an inclusive creative practice that spans all form and function from visual arts and fashion design to culinary traditions and popular culture. This conflation of Rimpa's lengthy history and the dismantling of its canonized boundaries was in service of the festival's main goals to reignite interest in Rimpa as contemporary, accessible, and relevant. In its newsletters,

the Kyoto branch of the Takashimaya department store chain advertised a variety of Rimpa-inspired apparel, accessories, and lifestyle goods available for purchase. Kyoto guidebooks were published that recommended shops, cafes, and businesses that one could patronize to acquire an authentic Rimpa experience. Some included brief summaries of Rimpa's history with emphasis on its most prominent artists as well as recognition of Rimpa's influence on contemporary culture and aesthetics like *kawaii*.⁸⁴ Other communication outlets that promoted Rimpa were publications featuring luxury goods, cosmetics, cuisine, and travel that target middle- and upper-class women in their thirties, forties, and fifties. The reintroduction of Rimpa artists and their works in these types of publication served to align the art movement with their luxurious lifestyle aspirations.

Department stores were a major site for RIMPA 400 activities. Yamamoto said that mass communication outlets played a significant role in RIMPA 400's success, particularly the roll out of promotional activities including Rimpa decorated department store window displays stamped with the official seal of "RIMPA 400" as well as the traveling exhibitions at Takashimaya department store beginning in late 2014.⁸⁵ Historically, as indicated in Tamamushi Satoko's research, the revival of Rimpa in the early 20th century was connected to Mitsukoshi, the department store that instigated the celebration of Kōrin's 200th Year Death Anniversary. However, the 2008 merger of Mitsukoshi and Isetan department stores into one holding company and the realignment of its mission statement prevented Mitsukoshi from participating in RIMPA 400's activities.⁸⁶

Stepping in as RIMPA 400's department store partner was Takashimaya. Unlike Mitsukoshi's efforts in the past, Takashimaya's participation in this recent Rimpa revival did not

⁸⁴ Yamamoto Tarō, "Rinpatte nani? (What do we mean by Rimpa?)," *Kyoto rimpa wo megurutabi*, 2-11, Kyoto: Tankosha, 2015.

⁸⁵ Yamamoto Sōta, personal interview by Erika Enomoto, Kyoto, Japan (July 1, 2015).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

include maintaining the burial site of Kōrin.⁸⁷ The national chain of department stores actively organized its own schedule of programming with RIMPA 400, including one of the first exhibitions of the RIMPA 400 campaign *Coga Calling*.⁸⁸ *Coga Calling* was a solo exhibition featuring new paintings that reinterpreted classic Rimpa works by contemporary artist Yamamoto Tarō (born 1974). The exhibition opened in late-December 2014 at Tokyo's Nihonbashi branch of Takashimaya, and traveled from Nihonbashi westward to Tokyo's Shinjuku district, then to Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto, ending in Tottori prefecture in May 2015. The exhibition's opening in Nihonbashi was accompanied with a talk by RIMPA 400 Advisory Committee Member and established Rimpa scholar, Kōno Motoaki. One of the works on display was Yamamoto's reproduction of Kōrin's famous *Red and White Plum Blossoms* (Figure 10), although his was titled *Red and White 'Red and White Plum Blossoms'* (Figure 43). In his painting, Yamamoto playfully connected the antiquated themes to his perspective of 21st century conditions, which could be interpreted as a confrontation of American influence on Japanese culture, signified with the unmarked but unmistakable can of Coca Cola standing in as the source of the swirling red and white river. Despite this deviation in color, the painting is a faithful reproduction of Kōrin's, even with the placement lichen on the bark and branches of the plum trees that is rendered using *tarashikomi*, a demonstration of Yamamoto's intensive study and knowledge of the original painting.

In Spring 2015, Takashimaya department stores hosted the traveling exhibition *RIMPA: The Great Painters from the Hosomi Collection*. It was sponsored by the Mainichi Broadcasting System, Inc., the Kyoto Shimbun, with additional support provided by the RIMPA 400

⁸⁷ Yamamoto mentioned that the temple took on this responsibility with the support and cooperation of the RIMPA 400 Committee.

⁸⁸ The exhibition opened in late-December 2014 at Tokyo's Nihonbashi branch of Takashimaya, and then traveled from Nihonbashi westward to Tokyo's Shinjuku district, then to Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto, and finally terminated in Tottori prefecture in May 2015. The exhibition's opening in Nihonbashi was accompanied with a talk by guest speaker Kōno Motoaki, the chief of Kyoto Arts University and established Rimpa scholar. Integrated into the *Coga Calling*'s programming were two artist talks given by Yamamoto at Tokyo and Kyoto's Takashimaya branches.

Committee. The show traced the evolution of Rimpa through the work of twenty artists. As in most museums, exhibitions ended at the gift shop. Tables were stocked with immense offerings of Rimpa-inspired goods ranging from miniature reproductions of the exhibited art works to file folders, stuffed animals, pens, handkerchiefs, incense, and cookies. Exhibit visitors could obtain their very own miniature replicas of Kamisaka Sekka's *Goldfish* hanging scroll or handbags and scarves with prints sporting modern renditions of Rimpa motifs designed by RIMPOO, a brand launched by the Hosomi Museum.

Museums in and outside of Kyoto held exhibitions featuring ceramic, lacquer, textile, and graphic works that demonstrated Rimpa aesthetic qualities. In Nara, Kyoto's neighboring prefecture, the Nara Prefectural Museum of Art organized a special exhibition of Tanaka Ikkō's graphic posters, titled *TANAKA Ikkō – Track of Beauty* as part of its annual contemporary art program. This exhibition aimed to recontextualize items in their collection as visual sources of aesthetic inspiration for the internationally renowned graphic designer, who was born in Nara and grew up surrounded by the traditional arts which informed his style. Posters including *Japan* (Figure 34), *Ikenobo Sensei's Flower Arrangement Exhibit at Matsuzakaya Department Store* (Figure 36) and *Ikkō Tanaka Graphic Art Exhibition* (Figure 38) were displayed alongside objects from the museum's collection.

In the Spring of 2015, Kyoto National Museum hosted *TOSA RIMPA* (Figure 44), a multi-evening, projection mapping event organized by Kyoto-based new media artist Naoko Tosa (born 1961). Projection mapping has become a popular event in Japan for cultural organizers seeking to recast traditional events into more relatable experience for younger audiences.⁸⁹ Projected on the façades of two adjacent buildings of the Kyoto National Museum, *TOSA RIMPA* (Figure 44) combined imagery from traditional performing arts, flower arrangement, and animation to create a unique experience that drew upon highly technical

⁸⁹ Mayumi Chida, K. Jin, and N. Chiba, "A Study on Image Projection for Augmenting Shirokawa Kagura Performance in the Tokutan-jo Spring Festival," *International Journal of Asia Digital Art & Design*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2015), 53.

methods of image production. The projected image of Sōtatsu's *Wind God and Thunder God* (Figure 45) is subsumed by the appearance of their *anime* versions and we follow the Wind God and Thunder God as they interact with a Japanese theater performance and run amok through the duration of the projection. Set to a soundtrack by avant-garde jazz musician Kondo Toshinori, a staggered line of irises was projected onto the surface of the museum with slow motion gold-colored paint, which referenced Kōrin's *Irises* (Figure 3 and 4). In another tribute to Kōrin, a scene of a golden river flanked on both sides by branches of blossoming plum flowers recreated his painting *Red and White Plum Blossoms* (Figure 46).

After exhibiting her projection mapping works abroad, Tosa and her team seized on the opportunity to collaborate with the Kyoto Convention Bureau to present a project for the RIMPA 400 festivities. Over four evenings, the spectacle drew a total audience of 20,000 people to the museum.⁹⁰ According to Tosa, what makes her work "Rimpa" is her ability to take from Rimpa's archive and deform and contort the historical images to create something entirely new. "Every one hundred years or so a new person will emerge and take on the Rimpa tradition. This artist will use the new tools and techniques of the contemporary period to reinterpret the Rimpa practice. I am doing this for my generation."⁹¹ Adhering to Tosa's definition of Rimpa, *TOSA RIMPA* was successful as it proposed new ways of experiencing Rimpa and expanded its potential as a technology-driven creative practices for the 21st century.

Closing out a year of Rimpa celebrations was one of the most highly anticipated events, the blockbuster exhibition *RINPA: The Aesthetics of the Capital*. From October 10 through November 23, 2015, the museum displayed works by Rimpa's roster of artists with emphasis on its hometown heroes Sōtatsu and Kōrin. The exhibition catalogue's introduction stated, "Four hundred years have passed since the artistic style was first imagined. This exhibition, held to

⁹⁰ Naoko Tosa, R. Nakatsu, P. Yunian, and K. Ogata, "Projection Mapping Celebrating RIMPA 400th Anniversary," *2015 International Conference on Culture and Computing*, IEEE (2015), 18.

⁹¹ Naoko Tosa, personal interview by Erika Enomoto, Kyoto, Japan (July 3, 2015).

commemorate these origins, is the first authentic exhibition of Rinpa art ever to be held in its birthplace, the city of Kyoto.”⁹² The crowd-luring spectacle was the side-by-side display of the three famous screen paintings depicting the Wind God and Thunder God by Sōtatsu, Kōrin, and Hōitsu, which was last displayed together 75 years prior.

A lesser-known work on display was Kōrin’s monochromatic hanging scroll *Tiger and Bamboo* (Figure 47). The ink painting depicted a cartoonishly rendered tiger, flanked by bamboo, sitting with a stubborn and mischievous expression on his face. The boyish likeliness of this animal was adopted as Kyoto National Museum’s character mascot (Figure 48). Officially named Kogata Rinnojo, the tiger was given the nickname “Torarin,” which combines two words “tiger” and “Rimpa.”⁹³ As an official representative of the museum, Torarin made frequent appearances throughout the duration of the exhibition, spending much of his time greeting and interacting with visitors as they waited in long queues to enter the museum.

Within RIMPA 400, events and publications revealed a trend to recalibrate Rinpa as the progenitor of the *kawaii* aesthetic. Anthropologist Yomota Inuhiko described *kawaii* as an aesthetic that emerged in Japanese culture to describe things that evoke emotions because of their miniature size, pitiful appearance, and nuanced nostalgia.⁹⁴ This was supported by attempts to relate attributes of Rinpa artworks to *kawaii* industries like the character goods market, *manga*, and *anime*. Mito Nobue’s 2014 book *Rimpa-Kawaii! Engaging Japanese Art* claimed that establishing and communicating this connection between Rinpa and *kawaii* served as an entry point for the Japanese pop culture lover to grow an appreciation for

⁹² *RINPA: The Aesthetics of the Capital*. Kyoto: Kyoto National Museum; Nikkei Inc., Television Osaka, Inc.; BS Japan Corporation; The Kyoto Shimbun Co., Ltd. (2015), II.

⁹³ Johnny Waldman, “Torarin: A Museum Mascot Inspired by an 18th Century Painting,” *Spoon Tamago*, <https://www.spoon-tamago.com/2017/02/23/torarin-a-museum-mascot-inspired-by-an-18th-century-painting/> (accessed Jan. 4, 2021).

⁹⁴ Yomota Inuhiko, *“Kawaii” ron* (Theory of “Kawaii”), Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō (2006), 183-187.

traditional Japanese art.⁹⁵ However, despite its intention for facilitating cultural exchange, the text (other than a brief introduction) was published entirely in Japanese and inaccessible to a non-Japanese reading audience.

One of the celebrated works that debuted during RIMPA 400 was Yamamoto Tarō's *Mario and Luigi* (Figure 49). Exhibited at multiple venues in the fall of 2015, this screen painting was commissioned by Nintendo Co., Ltd., a multinational electronics and video game corporation that was founded in Kyoto in the late 19th century. Yamamoto recast Mario and Luigi, the fictional twin brothers from Nintendo's *Mario* video game franchise, as the Wind God and Thunder God positioning these pop culture icons as legendary deities. Appealing to a 21st century audience who recognized the cartoon characters from the *Mario* series, the painting and recreated similar feelings of nostalgia and delight that Edo period audiences with knowledge of the *Tale of Ise* may have experienced while viewing Kōrin's *Irises at Yatsunashi* (Figures 1 and 2). Yamamoto demonstrated his technical proficiency gained from studying Sōtatsu's original painting (Figure 7) by replicating the visual effects and details such as the blotting of ink to depict dark clouds and the lines rendering the musculature of the figures. *Mario and Luigi* (Figure 49) epitomized the connection between Rimpa as a historical creative practice with contemporary popular culture.

This connection situates Rimpa into Cool Japan, which is a government-sponsored campaign dedicated to the promotion of contemporary Japanese pop culture to an international audience.⁹⁶ "National cool" is the term coined by political analyst Douglas McGray that describes

⁹⁵ Mito Nobue, *Rimpa-Kawaii! Engaging Japanese Art*, Tokyo: Tokyo Bijutsu, 2014.

⁹⁶ In 1997, the United Kingdom introduced "Cool Britannia" to fulfill four objectives: promote creative industries, make the national attractive, heighten motivation of the people, and revitalize the economy. The Japanese government formally introduced their own cultural advancement campaign in 2010 titled "Cool Japan" to attract global attention toward Japan through the promotion of Japanese culture, dominantly popular culture related phenomena such as *anime*, *manga*, video games, J-POP music, and sub-culture fashion. However, Japanese popular culture as a source of soft power had already been recognized from at least 2002. Douglas McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool," *Foreign Policy* (June 2002), 44-54.

“an idea, a reminder that commercial trends and products, and a country’s knack for spawning them, can serve political and economic ends.”⁹⁷ McGray’s “Gross National Cool” published in *Foreign Policy*, praised Japan’s ability to export its popular culture on a model that is not dependent on government demand or approval of the United States.⁹⁸ Prior to the rise in global interests in Japanese popular culture, Japanese culture was reserved for the group of elite, intellectual Japanophiles who obsessed over the traditional elements such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, kimono, and haiku poetry.⁹⁹ This “new wave of Japonisme,” with popular media on its fore, liberated Japanese culture from being perceived as static and allowed it to exist contemporaneously with its audiences all around the world.¹⁰⁰

This leads to the question, “Which Rimpa is being celebrated in RIMPA 400?” RIMPA 400 celebrates Rimpa in all its varied manifestations and iterations without acknowledgement of the disruptions and changes that occurred in its 400-year history. This perspective was acknowledged by Kōno, who said “the great thing about Rimpa is that it is indefinable”.¹⁰¹ Kōno devoted much of his academic career to the study of Rimpa, and his scholarship was instrumental in establishing the categorical parameters of Rimpa. It is interesting to observe this new approach to dismantle those previously established categorical boundaries through his participation in RIMPA 400 including the special exhibition “Rimpa Pop / Pop Rimpa” held at the 2015 Tokyo Art Fair. In efforts to align Rimpa with contemporary pop art, Kōno wrote,

⁹⁷ Douglas McGray, “Japan’s Gross National Cool,” *Foreign Policy* (June 2002), 53.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁹⁹ Sugiura, “Japan’s Creative Industries: Culture as a Source of Soft Power in the Industrial Sector,” 133.

¹⁰⁰ It is worth mentioning that the character goods industry, particularly Sanrio Company, Ltd., has been tremendously successful at leveraging the global appeal of *kawaii*. Anthropologist Christine Yano coins the term “pink globalization” to describe the spread of *kawaii*-labeled goods from Japan to the world. Her research on Hello Kitty covers the animated characters emergence in the late 1980s and examines its growth in popularity among domestic and international audiences as well as the affinities and complexities that people experience in relation to the iconic animated cat. Christine R. Yano, *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty’s Trek across the Pacific*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

¹⁰¹ Kōno Motoaki, personal interview by Erika Enomoto, Kyoto, Japan (Nov. 4, 2015).

Rimpa is pop! Rimpa (or Rinpa) is very similar to pop art. The motifs are concrete and with clear form. Positive and light, it is an uplifting experience to look at the artworks. They were immensely popular in their day and inspired many variations. These similarities in expression can be explained by the fact that the social backgrounds from which both art movements emerged were also similar.¹⁰²

Kōno's justification for curating this exhibition is another attempt to validate the notion that Rimpa is perpetually contemporary and not bounded by the canonized status imposed during the modern period. By conflating Rimpa with pop art in this way, Kōno reclaimed and reasserted Rimpa's premodern history as a subversive design movement that emerged when the Tokugawa Shogunate was in power. Moreover, the exhibit served as a platform to position the displayed works as 21st century interpretations of Rimpa. Looking deeper at "Rimpa Pop / Pop Rimpa" reveals that its curation practices and statements are an emulation of the modern efforts that drove the establishment of Rimpa as a canonized painting school. However, rather than perpetuating this idea of Rimpa as precious, "Rimpa Pop / Pop Rimpa" broadens the perception of Rimpa from a premodern painting style by calling upon its history as an accessible, relevant, and living design movement. The public recognition of Rimpa's nebulosity and the dissolution of the canonized criteria used to distinguish and privilege premodern Rimpa paintings appeared to be one of the main messages of RIMPA 400, reclaiming it as an inclusive design movement and creative practice. The loose and unpinned characterization of Rimpa allows for maximum wiggle room in positing what Rimpa is and what Rimpa could be.

As a practice of *machizukuri*, RIMPA 400 revived Kyoto's past and increased its recognition as not only the birthplace of Rimpa, but as a living and thriving cultural center for creativity and innovation. Doshisha University Professor Murayama Yuzo highlights Kyoto heritage industries that have partnered with the city's high-tech industries to leverage their

¹⁰² Kōno, "Rinpa wa poppu / poppu wa rimpa (Pop Rimpa / Rimpa Pop)," 2.

expertise and learn how to modernize and scale their production processes.¹⁰³ Clinging too much to the past risks isolating Kyoto, leading to its eventual irrelevance due to being out of touch with the current economic and societal realities brought upon by globalization. Activities and events that resurface Rimpa, like RIMPA 400, transformed the general perception of Rimpa to fit 21st century visual cultural priorities, and define it as a design movement that eludes irrelevancy and is capable of being embraced by any creative approach. By de-emphasizing tradition and opening up Rimpa to new horizons, Kyoto created a new identity for itself that builds on its rich past to portray a vibrant, worldly city for current and prospective residents.¹⁰⁴

RIMPA 400, was a year-long festival organized by the city of Kyoto, with the objective of reviving local identity through publicly celebrating the design movement's founding. Hall described identity as, "constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation."¹⁰⁵ The festival was a successful *machizukuri* strategy employed to rebuild and revitalize an identity for Kyoto that was rooted in collaborative partnerships between government, academic, and commercial entities.¹⁰⁶ RIMPA 400 increased recognition of Kyoto as the City of Rimpa through a year's worth of engaging programming that included blockbuster art exhibitions, public art demonstrations, fashion shows, academic lectures, and many events intended to, by extension,

¹⁰³ Murayama Yuzo, *Heritage Culture and Business, Kyoto Style*, trans. Juliet Winters Carpenter, Tokyo: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture (2019), 42-44.

¹⁰⁴ Urban renewal initiatives like RIMPA 400 and international art fairs can be detrimental to underserved residents and marginalized communities as it contributes to gentrification. As the city becomes revitalized and energized through the promotion of arts and cultural activities, real-estate developers begin to invest in redeveloping the area, which inevitably increases the cost of living and eventually leads to the displacement of entire communities.

¹⁰⁵ Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity?'" 2.

¹⁰⁶ This reflects Tamamushi's research, which argues that Rimpa is a movement whose continued existence is possible due to the coordinated actions of influential individuals and institutional support. For example, see Tamamushi Satoko, *Ikitsuzukeru kōrin: imeeji no gensetsu o hakobu norimono to sono kiseki* (The Living Korin), Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan (2004), 73-86.

reinstate it as Japan's national seat of cultural heritage. As a celebration of municipal pride and cultural heritage, Rimpa's soft power helped to perpetuate Kyoto's reputation while potentially negating conflicting histories regarding ownership of the artistic movement. Attempts to historicize RIMPA 400 place this re-inscription of Rimpa on Kyoto's urban landscape as the latest effort in a long tradition of the cooption of Rimpa's cultural capital. In addition to preserving tradition and cultural heritage, the reclamation of contemporary arts, crafts, and design irrespective of media and technique as Rimpa propels the fluid creative practice into the future, granting it continuing relevance. Likewise, latching on Rimpa's inherent dynamism helped to transform Kyoto's image into one that is innovative, enterprising, and imaginative.

Conclusion

This thesis introduced an alternative narrative of Rimpa, contributing to a contemporary understanding of its continued existence and longevity as a fluid creative practice. In response to the commonly held understanding of Rimpa as a single chronology, I compiled a retelling of Rimpa's 400-year history with reference to significant sociocultural moments that blurred out any of its conceptual boundaries. I brought forth three epochal transformations; each of these three developments in Rimpa's history are significant in expanding the historical understanding and development of Rimpa, and integral to the recent Rimpa revival efforts experienced in 2015.

The first was the development of Edo Rimpa, which occurred when Rimpa was brought from Kyoto to the city of Edo (now Tokyo). This transition brought upon the localization of Rimpa and introduced new themes and subject matter independent of former practices that referenced court literature and themes of geographic and cultural significance to Kyoto. The emergence of Edo Rimpa into its own distinct practice and taking on a new identity signified the beginning of many more transformations to come.

The second development was Western influence on redefining Rimpa as a painting school. Closely intertwined with modernity and nationalism, early Japanese art historical narratives posit Rimpa as a painting school, without consideration of the internal and external sociopolitical and cultural influences that signal ruptures within its curated past. This section summarized events that led to the acceptance and elevation of Rimpa's status in Japan, with emphasis on its relation to Western modern art movements and adoration by Western tastemakers and art collectors. Additionally, an overwhelmingly positive reception of Rimpa works exhibited abroad, paved the way for its inclusion in the constructed art history as an effort to code it as Japan's own renaissance, framing its emergence as an act of classicism that sought to revive the arts and culture of the Heian period.

Lastly, the third development was the integration of modern materials to create new forms and contexts of consumption by artist Kamisaka Sekka and graphic designer Tanaka Ikkō.

The extensive staging of exhibitions of Rimpa works for public consumption by national department store chains like Mitsukoshi aided in improving their own brand image by revamping interest in the print designs of Ogata Kōrin. Department stores sought partnerships with skilled artists like Sekka, who brought forth his own interpretation of Rimpa for the 20th century using woodblock prints as a medium. Continuing the trajectory laid by Sekka, Ikkō's style of Rimpa conveyed his preference for modernism principles merged with his extensive knowledge of themes and popular imagery from premodern Japanese art. Reflecting on the creative process of these two designers revealed a shared priority of fusing themes and motifs demonstrated in Rimpa works with the materials and tools of their time, signaling the potential of Rimpa's reemergence into unimaginable visual contexts and formats by future creatives.

Re-conceptualizing Rimpa as a global creative movement brought forth new insight launching the design movement and creative practice into discourse on the formation of cultural identity, soft power, and the commodification of culture. This was demonstrated in viewing RIMPA 400 as a *machizukuri* or cultural placemaking effort to reinforce Kyoto's identity as the seat of Japanese culture. Zooming out from a local lens to the global, the sponsorship and participation of Rimpa exhibitions abroad helped reinforce a Japanese monocultural narrative, which I intend to explore through the lens of "Global Rimpa."¹⁰⁷ Viewing Rimpa as a sociopolitical and cultural apparatus, I focused my analysis on demonstrating that the 2015

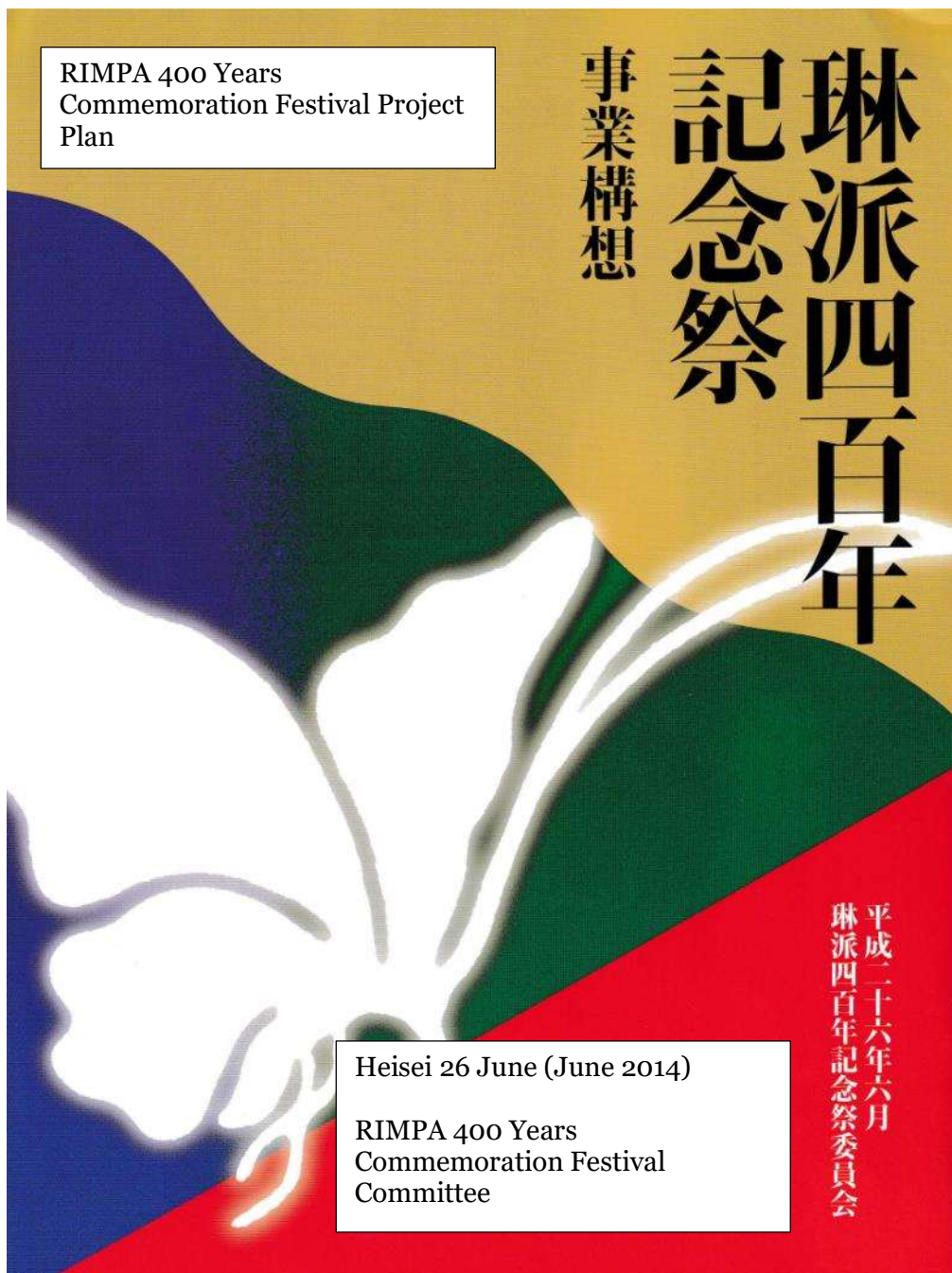
¹⁰⁷ A topic reserved and deserving for future exploration is "Global Rimpa." The large scale of Rimpa's resurfacing in 2015 revealed a wave of movements, propelled by the soft power of Rimpa as a demonstration of cultural capital. Museums in and around Tokyo publicized their 2015 programming as a commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the death of Rimpa's namesake artist without referencing Kyoto's concurrent movement "RIMPA 400." Despite the way in which Kyoto and Tokyo's contending claims to Rimpa gave form to the cultural, economic, and political rivalry between the former and current capitols, the act of continually reviving Rimpa could be interpreted as a diffusion of Japanese cultural nationalism and an attempt to re-inscribe Rimpa's relationship with Japan itself. Museum exhibitions, department store displays, educational lectures, and textbooks were all used to communicate a unified message to the public. The proliferation of major genre and artist survey exhibitions, such as RINPA: The Aesthetics of the Capitol at the Kyoto National Museum, Kōrin Art held at the MOA Museum of Art in Atami, and Sōtatsu: Making Waves at the Smithsonian Institutions' Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, D.C., aided in correlating Rimpa as a symbol for Japanese cultural identity. Moreover, the global recognition of Japanese national aesthetics and heritage unites the people under the master narrative of the nation state.

celebratory events were examples of events that leveraged Rimpa's soft power to maintain Kyoto's local identity.

The reality of Rimpa as we understand it today is that it is an all-encompassing cultural movement and design practice. Artists working in any media can draw from an archive of images and themes and manifest their creativity in a myriad of forms. Reflecting on the last four centuries, visual qualities of Rimpa, like its playful themes and emphasis on stylistic and exaggerated forms appealed to artists, allow it to be easily adopted into and scale any creative practice from paintings to mass marketing campaigns to government-sponsored city rebranding initiatives. Each of these variations can then be considered a new interpretation of Rimpa, contributing to its visual legacy and sociocultural history.

Appendix

RIMPA 400 Years Commemoration Festival Project Plan



Towards a Celebration of 400 Years of The Rimpa School of Japanese Painting

The Rimpa School of painting, which originated in Japan, is a form of art that the whole world can be proud of due to its splendid aesthetic sensibilities. From ancient times, Japan has introduced and absorbed culture from countries with sophisticated cultures, such as Tang China, and, for example, thereafter gone on to sublimate such culture into her own unique court culture.

Subsequently, even through the course of historical changes, those who sought out aesthetic beauty have refined their aspirations and sensibilities within the natural environment of Japan whose beauty is enhanced by the changes in the four seasons.

From the era of Azuchi-Momoyama to the beginning of the Edo period, in both Kyoto and Edo (Tokyo), aesthetic sensibilities in the domains of clothing, food and housing were refined to near perfection, penetrating deep into everyday culture. But this sensibility was by no means restricted to the Imperial court, nobles and the samurai warriors. It also found its way into all aspects of the lifestyle of the merchant class.

It was against this background that the Rimpa School of painting was born. The Rimpa School can be located in the age when Tawaraya Sotatsu was painting and Hon'ami Koetsu used his writing brush with great effect. However, if we were to give a specific year for the start of the School, it would have to be the first year of Genna (1615) which is the year that the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu granted Hon'ami Koetsu a large parcel of land known as Takagamine. In so defining the founding year, we would like to make 2015 the year to celebrate 400 years of the Rimpa School.

The refreshing sensibility of the School had a resounding influence over a wide range of areas, stretching from art, crafts, architecture and gardening to extend to fashion, culinary arts and the delicate art of Japanese sweets. The essential spirit of the School has been passed down continuously through the different ages and still remains evident in all manner of contemporary designs thereby still contributing to our *joie de vivre*.

Even in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, we need to indulge in the joy of living and we also need to pursue our dreams. Thus, in the midst of the reconstruction process, we should be committed to seeking "beauty".

In Japan, a country that can take pride in her wealth of historical and cultural heritage, the appreciation of beauty remains a spiritual touchstone that stretches across into future ages. It is therefore our responsibility to make sure that such beauty and aesthetic sensibilities are passed down to future generations in order to ensure that such sensitivity continues to remain vibrant.

In celebrating 400 years since the founding of the Rimpa School, we would like to reaffirm anew the significance of this Rimpa sense of beauty and aesthetic sensibility, that has continued to charm and captivate so many, and recognize it as a spiritual cornerstone that can assist in opening up the way to new and seductive possibilities in the future. It is our wish to convey the quintessence of the Rimpa School to the people of the 21st century.

In order to do so, we would like to have as many people as possible, both inside Japan and overseas, individuals, associations, enterprises and both local and national governments in Japan, to understand the significance of our celebrations. We hope that many will be moved to endorse our efforts and also join us in multifarious celebrations with a *joie de vivre*.

July 31, 2012

KONO Motoaki
KOSHINO Junko
TAKASHINA Shuji
TSUJI Nobuo
HAGA Toru



問い合わせ先 琳派400年記念祭委員会

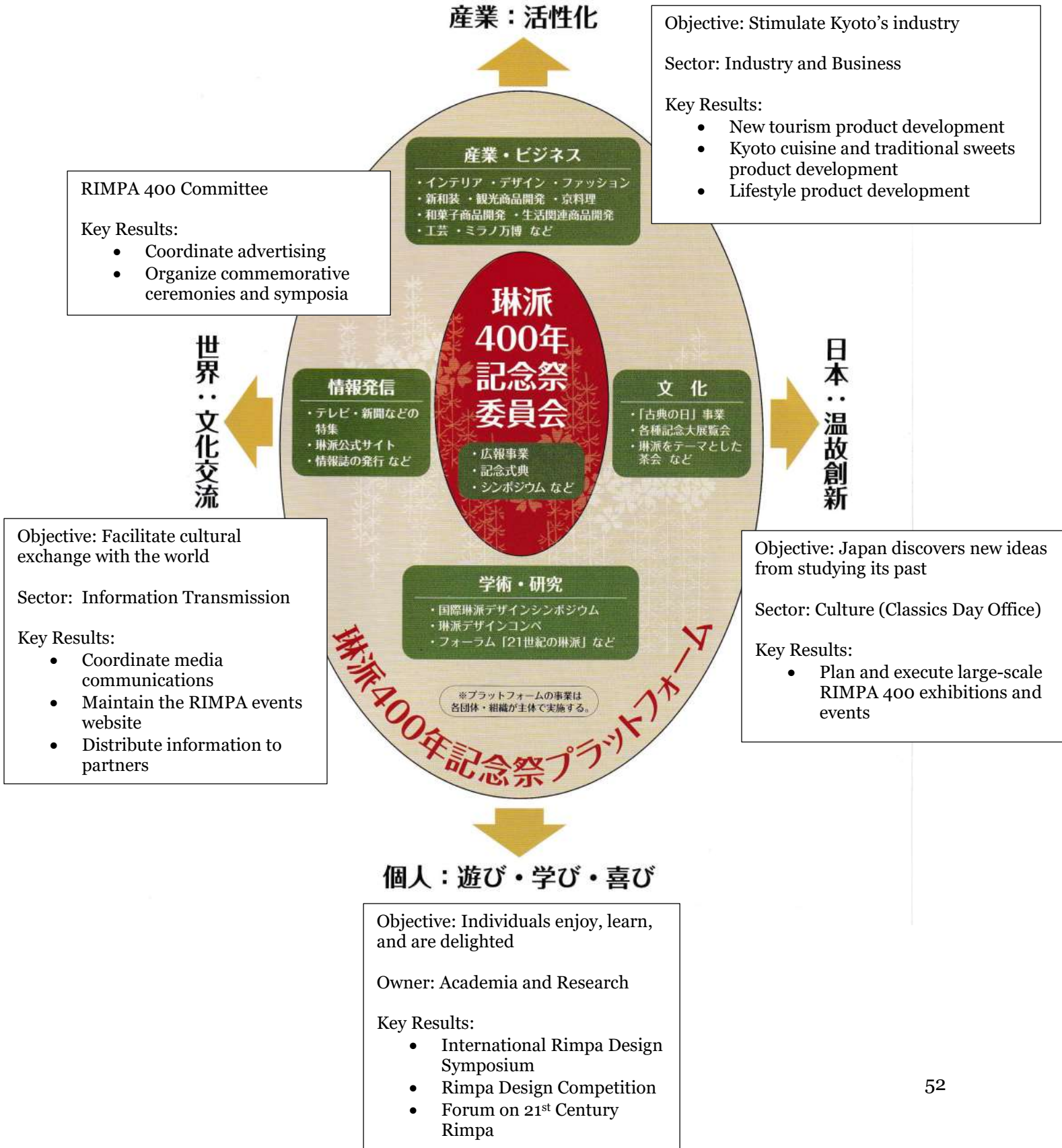
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琳派400年記念祭 概念図



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