

The world of the Japanese Woodblock Print

Week 3 Japonisme: The Western Fascination with Japan in the 19th Century

U3A 28 July 2025 Michael Harrington

Changes in weekly topics

- Week 1** Introduction to the Japanese woodblock print.
- Week 2** Ukiyo-e: The golden age of Japanese print -18th & 19th centuries
- Week 3** Ukiyo-e in the West - Japonisme
- Week 4** Western woodblock artists and 20th century Shin Hanga
- Week 5** Introduction to the life and art of Paul Jacoulet
- Week 6** Travels in the South Seas and beyond- In the footsteps of Gauguin
- Week 7** Emergence as a woodblock print artist
- Week 8** WWII and beyond - success and final years in Karuizawa
- Week 9** See Jacoulet's work in the Queensland Art Gallery exhibition
Birds of Passage: Ian Fairweather & Paul Jacoulet
- Week 10** The Japanese woodblock print world today - artists and collectors

Week 3 outline

Week 2 review

Opening of Japan and early trade in ceramics, fans and prints

Birth of Japonisme

Key figures helping popularize Japonisme

Influences on culture and society

Influences on western art

Interpreting Japonisme today

Review #1 Ukiyo-e = 'pictures of the floating world'

- Woodblock prints & paintings of Edo-period Japan
- Themes: beauty, theater, landscapes, daily life
- Rise of urban merchant class (chōnin)
- Flourishing urban culture: theaters, pleasure quarters, travel



Review #3 17th century beginnings – black & white ink drawings colored by hand.

- Early influence of Moronobu



Beauty Looking Back (見返り美人図) c.
1680–1683, Hishikawa Moronobu 菱川師宣

Review #4 Appearance of color prints

Suzuki Harunobu (鈴木 春信; c. 1725 –1770) was the first to produce full-color prints (nishiki-e) in 1765.



Technical innovations

bokashi (gradation, 暈し)

Printing technique for **soft color transitions** (e.g., sky, water, mist) achieved by hand applying ink unevenly on the woodblock before printing. Enabled **atmospheric effects** and depth in prints. Perfected by artists like Hokusai and Hiroshige.

karazuri, (blind printing, 空刷り, also known as gaufrage)

Refers to a technique where a raised design is pressed into the paper using a woodblock without ink. This creates a subtle, three-dimensional texture on the print, adding an extra layer of visual interest.

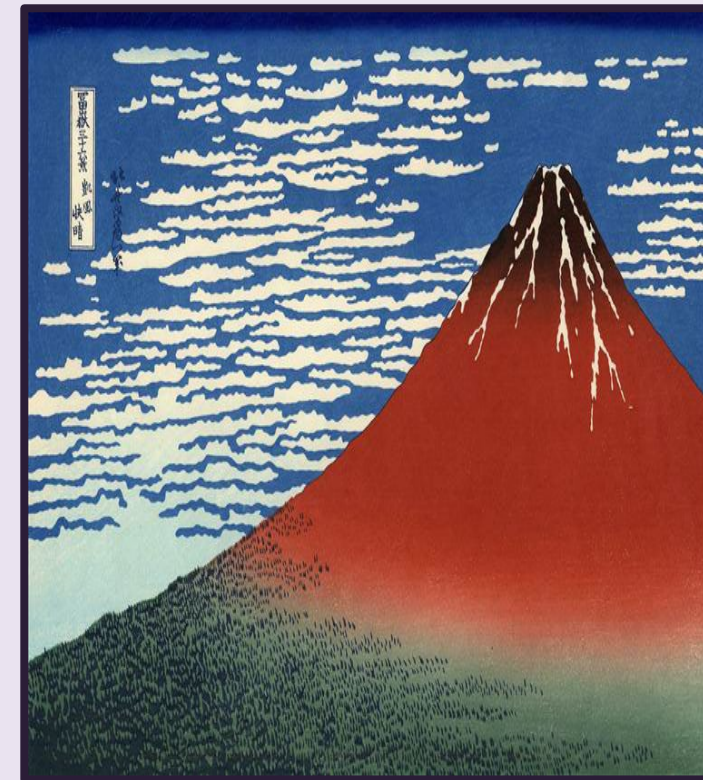
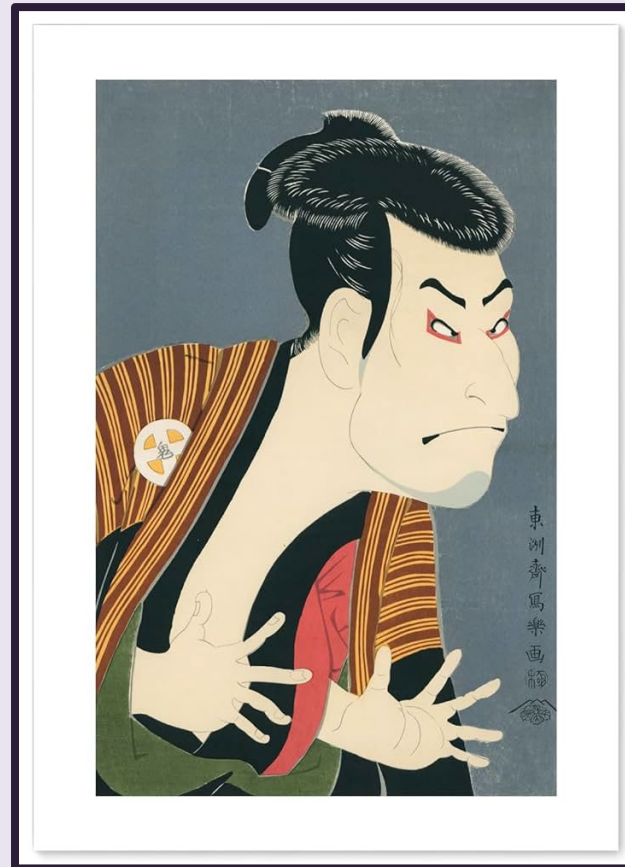


Name the genre

bijin-ga (beauties)

yakusha-e (actors)

fūkei-ga (landscapes)



Name the genre

Musha-e (warrior



kachō-ga (flowers & birds)



shunga

("spring" prints)

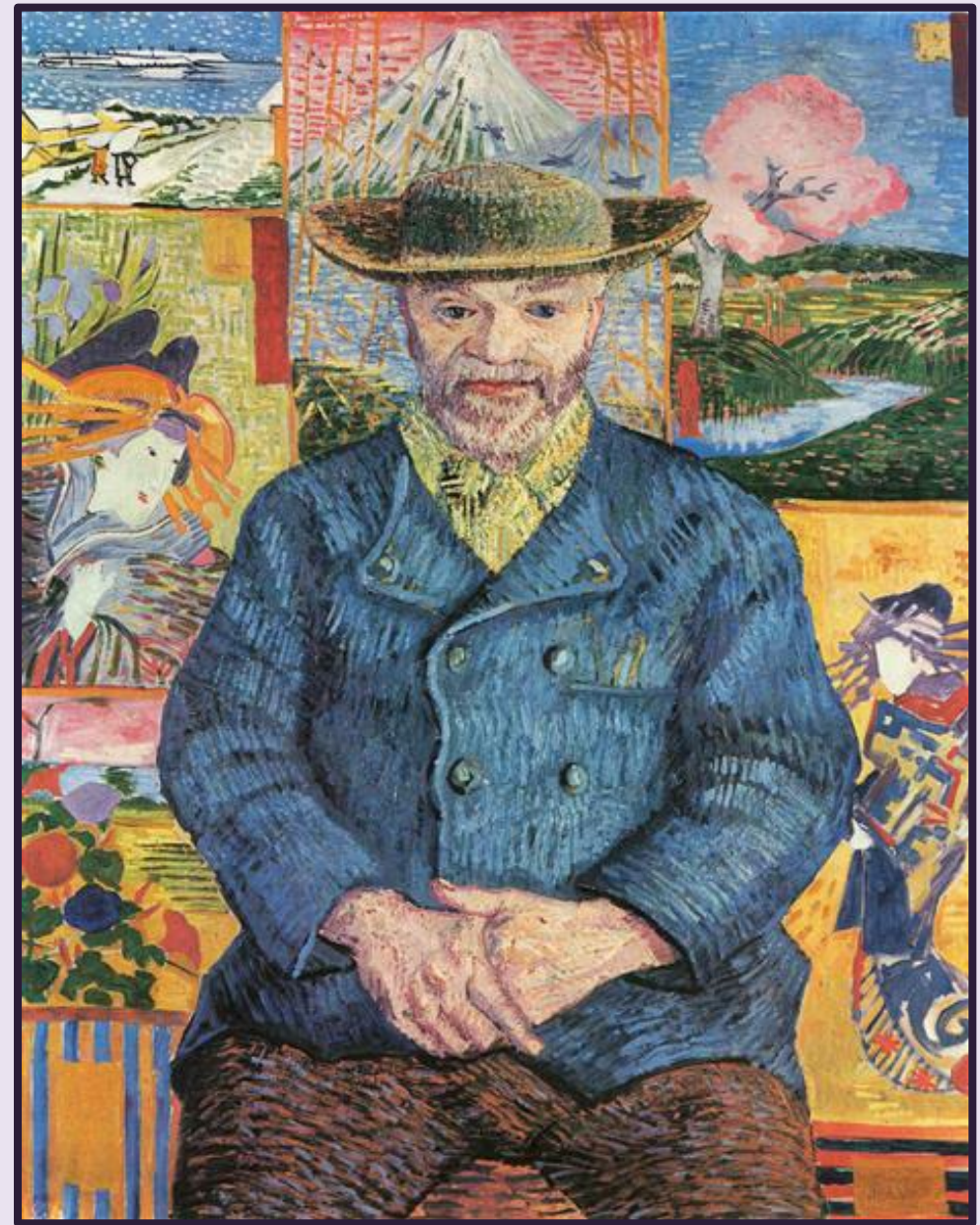


Nagasaki-e



Japonisme: The Fascination with Japan in the West in the 19th Century

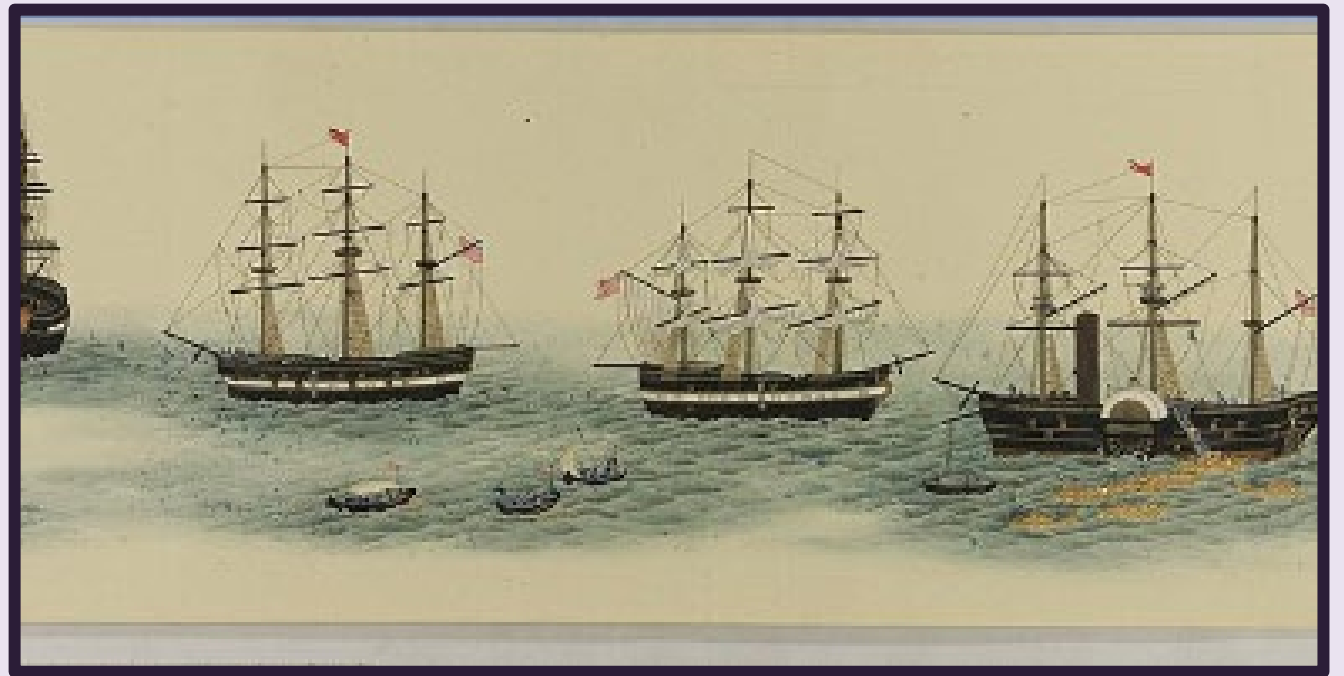
- Japan opens to the West (1854 Treaty of Kanagawa)
- Surge in exports: ceramics, textiles, ukiyo-e prints
- Western fascination grows: “Japonisme” begins
- Ukiyo-e inspires European artists (Impressionists, Post-Impressionists)



Père Tanguy Vincent van Gogh (c. 1888)

A New World Opens

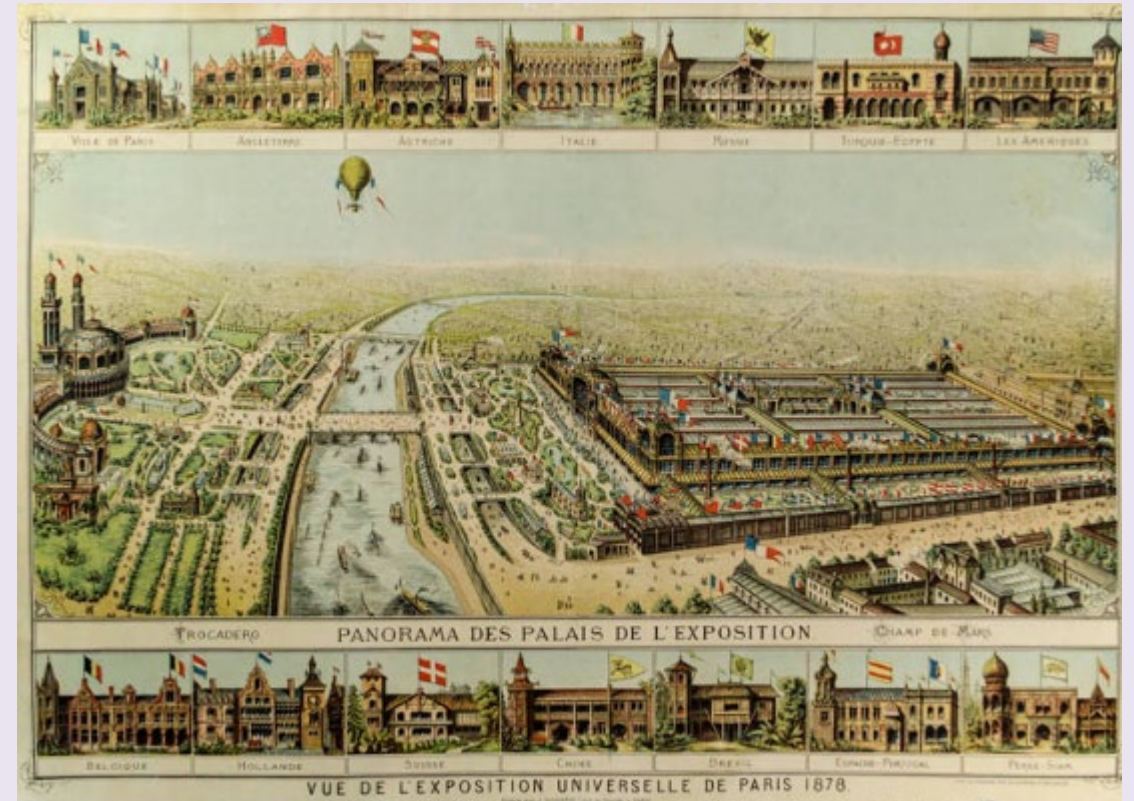
- Japan's isolation pre-1850s
- Commodore Perry's arrival (1853-54)
- Treaty ports and Japanese exports
(1854 Treaty of Kanagawa)



The Mission of Commodore Perry to Japan in 1853-4

Early Encounters with Japanese Art

- Early imports: ceramics, fans, prints
- Exhibitions in Paris and London



The Birth of Japonisme

- Term coined by Philippe Burty (1872)
- Fascination with Japanese aesthetics
- Japanese goods flood European markets

Scholars in the 20th century have distinguished *japonaiserie*, the depiction of Japanese subjects or objects in a Western style, from Japonisme, the more profound influence of Japanese aesthetics on Western art



The term ‘Japonisme’

‘Japonisme’, the term coined by the art critic Philippe Burty in 1872, refers to the fascination for Japanese art and culture that swept across Europe and North America during the second half of the nineteenth century. The classic period of Japonisme extended from the late 1850s to the 1890s and was associated with Impressionism and Post-Impressionism in Europe, and the Aesthetic movement in England. Following Japan’s opening up of trade with the West, an influx of goods began arriving in Europe. These goods covered the spectrum of Japanese art and culture, including fans, kimonos, silks, ivories, ceramics, lacquer, bronzes, furniture and woodblock prints. Among the prints arriving were many by the great masters of the so-called ukiyo-e, or pictures of the floating world, school of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including Katsushika Hokusai, Kitagawa Utamaro and Utagawa Hiroshige whose works were to become enormously influential upon European artists and designers.

<https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/a-radical-style/>

Key Figures in the rise of Japonisme

- **Philippe Burty (critic)**
- **Siegfried Bing (dealer)**
- **Hayashi Tadamasa (dealer)**
- **Félix Bracquemond (etcher)**
- **Goncourt brothers (collectors & critics) especially**
- **Théodore Duret (collectors)**

Félix Bracquemond (etcher)

In 1856, Bracquemond discovered a collection of Manga engravings by the Japanese Hokusai, typical of the pictorial genre known in Japan as *Kachô-ga*, depicting flowers and birds with insects, crustaceans and fishes, in the workshop of his printer Auguste Delâtre, after having been used to fix a consignment of porcelain. He was seduced by this theme that made him the initiator of the vogue of Japonisme in France which seized the decorative arts during the second half of the 19th century.

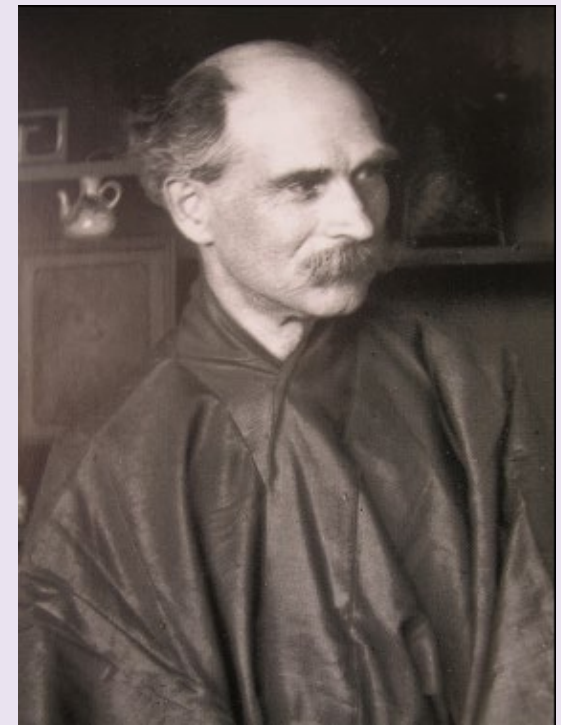
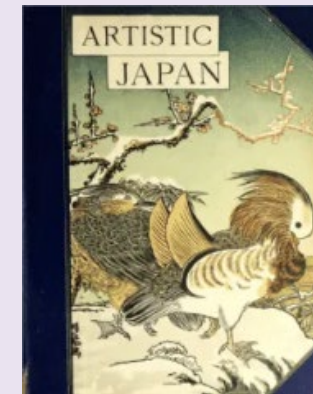
Wikipedia



Bracquemond's decor for the *Service Rousseau* in Creil-Montereau faience, introduced c1867, for the editor François-Eugène Rousseau, is credited with the first expression of *Japonisme* in France.^[10]

Siegfried Bing (1838-1905)

Siegfried Bing was a German-French art dealer who played a significant role in introducing Japanese art, particularly ukiyo-e prints, to the West. He established a gallery and published a journal to promote Japonisme, the influence of Japanese art on European art, and was instrumental in the development of the Art Nouveau style.



<https://aboutartnouveau.wordpress.com/2013/11/11/siegfried-bing/>

Hayashi Tadamasa (1853-1906)



Art dealer who played a central role in introducing Japanese art to the West. Hayashi travelled to the 1878 World's Fair in Paris as an interpreter and stayed on.

Ceramics, Lacquerware, Decorative Arts

- Japanese goods in European homes
- J.G. Houssaye's *À la porte chinoise* (1862) first Japanese boutique
- Siegfried Bing's gallery promotes Japonisme



<https://www.mdig.fr/en/discover-the-museum/explore-impressionism/themes/japonism/>

Collectors and writers

Edmond de Goncourt (1822–1896) and
Jules de Goncourt (1830–1870)



Théodore Duret (1868 – 1940)
1912

By Edouard Vuillard

“Among *Japonisme* scholars, Edmond de Goncourt is most notorious for his repeated and insistent claims that he and his brother Jules were the first Europeans to recognize the artistic interest of Japanese prints in the early 1850s....this claim has since been thoroughly debunked...”

<https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/spring09/compare-and-contrast-rhetorical-strategies-in-edmond-de-goncours-japonisme>



Prints as Wrapping Paper – Myth or Reality?

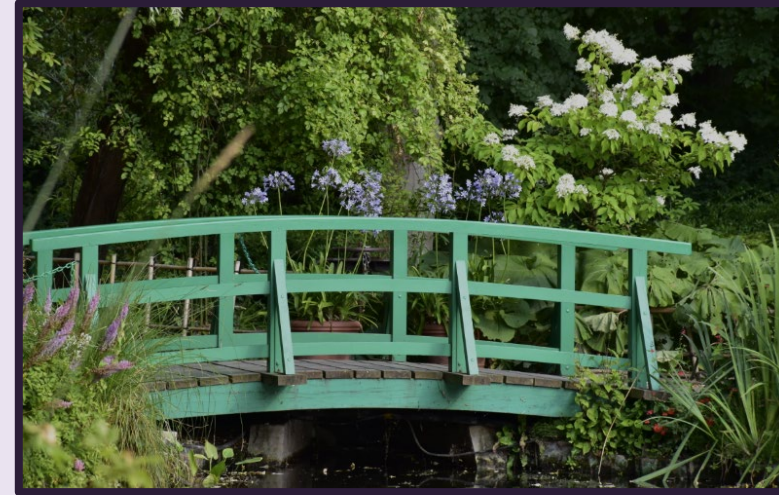
- Prints used as packing for ceramics?
- Story retold by Goncourt and Burty
- Modern scholars question the myth
- Myth of Western “rescue” challenged



Japanese Influence on Gardens & Architecture

- Japanese pavilions at world fairs

Satsuma Province Pavilion at 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition



Japanese Influence on Gardens & Architecture

Albert-Kahn Museum and Garden,
Boulogne-Billancourt, France Started 1895



Kimono Craze in Europe

- Kimono as Parisian fashion
- Symbol of exoticism and luxury



Alfred Stevens (1823-1906) La Parisienne Japonaise



Jehan Vibert, French (1840-1902) "Lady in Kimono".



Impressionist and post-impressionist artists influenced by ukiyo-e ~

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

At the Moulin Rouge: La Goulue and Her Sister, 1892

Lithograph

Lautrec studied the late-night faces of dancehall regulars, then described them as the Japanese portraitist Toshusai Sharaku did, with the lurid grimaces and theatrical make-up of kabuki actors.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/japonisme>



Pierre Bonnard

Street Corner, from the series "Some Aspects of Parisian Life"

c. 1897 Lithograph

Like Ando Hiroshige, Bonnard captured the animated life of the city in casual scenes of crowded boulevards, bridges, and back streets. Often employing an elevated bird's-eye view that scattered silhouetted figures across the surface of a picture, both artists were ever on the lookout for the anecdotal and picturesque in the urban scheme.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/japonisme>



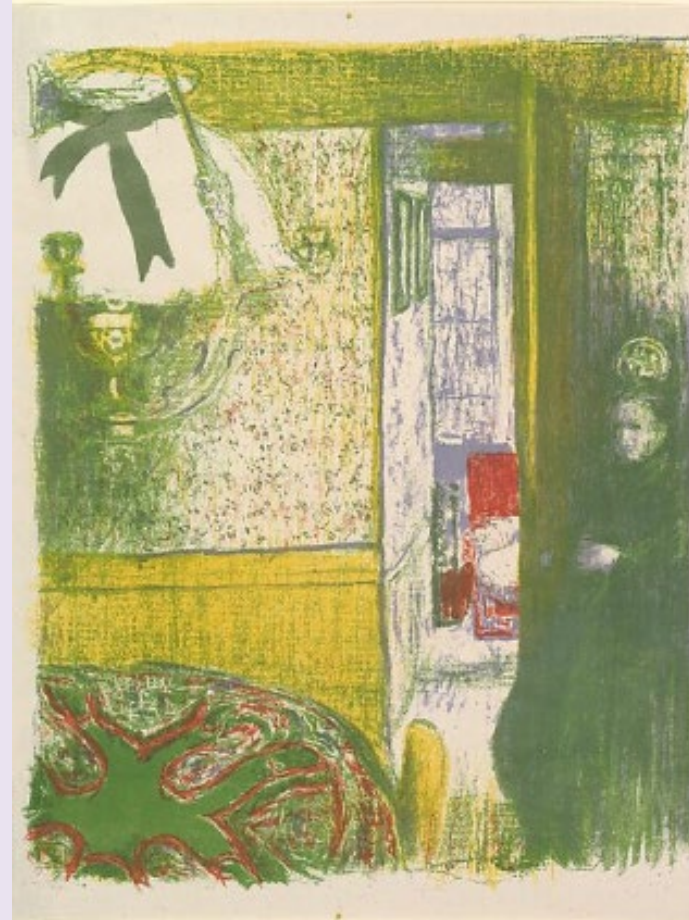
Edouard Vuillard 1899

Interior with a Hanging Lamp, from "Landscapes and Interiors"

Lithograph

In this view of the cozy parlor in the apartment he and his mother shared, Vuillard allowed the gas lamp suspended from the ceiling to dominate the composition, just as Ando Hiroshige had the huge festival lantern strung to the gateway of the Kinryusan temple at Asakusa. Both lamps are ornamented, one emblazoned with bold calligraphy, the other sashed with dark ribbon. Additional parallels in color, composition, and delicate overpatterning suggest that Vuillard had Hiroshige's print in mind when he made his own.

<https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/japonisme>



Kinryūsan Temple at Asakusa,
Hiroshige, 1865

Paul Gauguin 1893-4

Delightful Land, from Noa Noa (Fragrance)

Woodcut

Gauguin sidestepped the then-current practice of lithography and adapted Japanese woodcut techniques

Gauguin spent much of his time in Paris in 1893–94 working on the text and illustrations for *Noa Noa* (Fragrance). The *Noa Noa* woodcuts were seen for the first time by a coterie of friends and admirers—including Degas and the critics Julien Leclercq and Charles Morice—at Gauguin's studio exhibition in December 1894. Leclercq and Morice responded enthusiastically. They recognized the crudely carved woodcuts as a "revolution in the art of printmaking,".

<https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/japonisme>



Xu You and Chao Fu, Okumura
Masanobu, 18th century

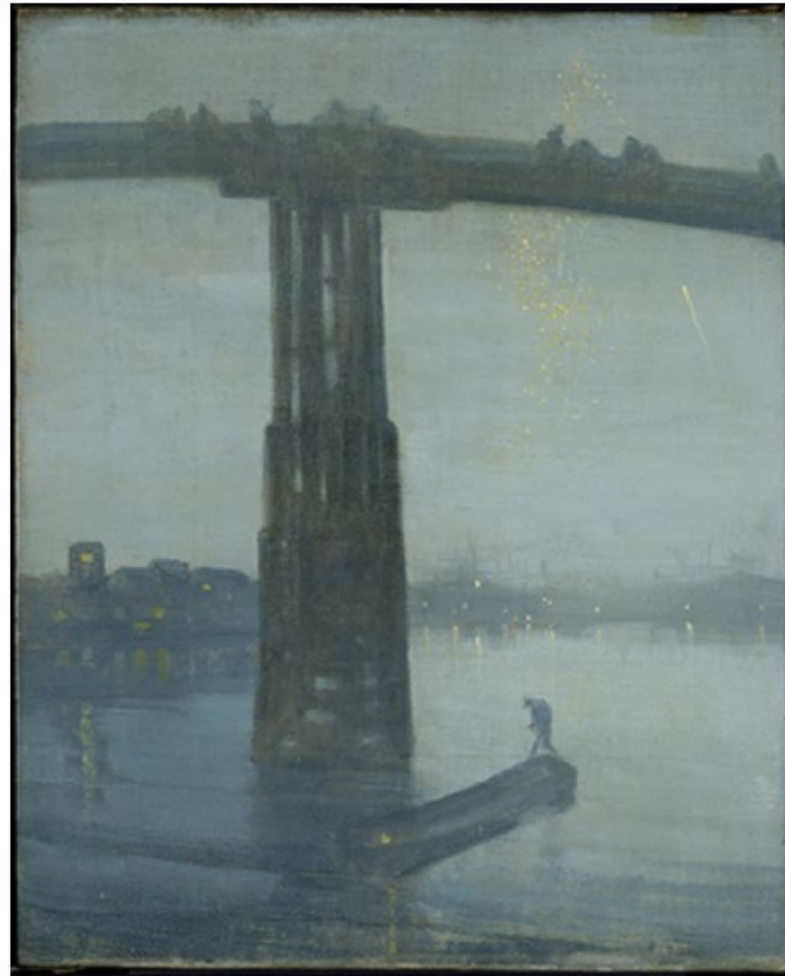
James Whistler (1834-1903)



Left: James McNeil Whistler, *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen*, 1864, oil on wood, 50.1 x 68.5 cm ([National Museum of Asian Art](#), Washington, DC); Right: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Osumi Sakurajima*, from *Famous Views of Sixty-odd Provinces*, 1856, woodblock print, 36.8 x 23.5 cm ([The Art Institute of Chicago](#))

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/impressionism/a/japonisme>

James Whistler (1834-1903)



Left: James McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge*, 1872-5, oil on canvas, 68.3 x 51.2 cm ([Tate Britain](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-works/nocturne-blue-and-gold-old-battersea-bridge-whistler), London); Right: Utagawa Hiroshige, *Bamboo Yards, Kyobashi Bridge* from *One Hundred Views of Edo*, 1857, woodblock print, 36 x 23.5 cm ([Brooklyn Museum](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/art-works/research/100-views-of-edo/kyobashi-bridge))

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/impressionism/a/japonisme>

Monet



Left: Claude Monet, Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge, 1899, oil on canvas, 90.5 x 89.7 cm ([Princeton Art Museum](https://www.princetonartmuseum.org/)); Right: Vincent van Gogh, Bridge in the Rain (After Hiroshige), 1889, oil on canvas, 73.3 x 53.8 cm ([Van Gogh Museum](https://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/), Amsterdam)

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/impressionism/a/japonisme>

Manet & Monet



Left: Edouard Manet, Emile Zola, 1868, oil on canvas, 146.5 x 115 cm ([Musée d'Orsay](https://www.musee-l'orsay.fr/en/visiting-the-museum/exhibitions), Paris); Right: Claude Monet, La Japonaise, 1876, oil on canvas, 91 1/4 x 56 inches ([Museum of Fine Arts](https://www.museumoffinearts.org/collections/monet), Boston)

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/impressionism/a/japonisme>

Edgar Degas (1834-1917)



Left: Edgar Degas, *The Tub*, 1886, pastel on card, 60 x 83 cm ([Musée d'Orsay](https://www.musee-l'orsay.fr/en/visiting-the-museum/exhibitions), Paris); Right: Utagawa Kunisada I, *Chrysanthemum from Contest of Modern Flowers*, c. 1820, woodblock print, 39.2 x 26 cm ([Museum of Fine Arts](https://www.museumoffinearts.org/), Boston)

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/avant-garde-france/impressionism/a/japonisme>

Van Gogh as a Japan tragic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCllbeOxR1c>



Turning Japanese

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGy9uomagO4>

Van Gogh's practice

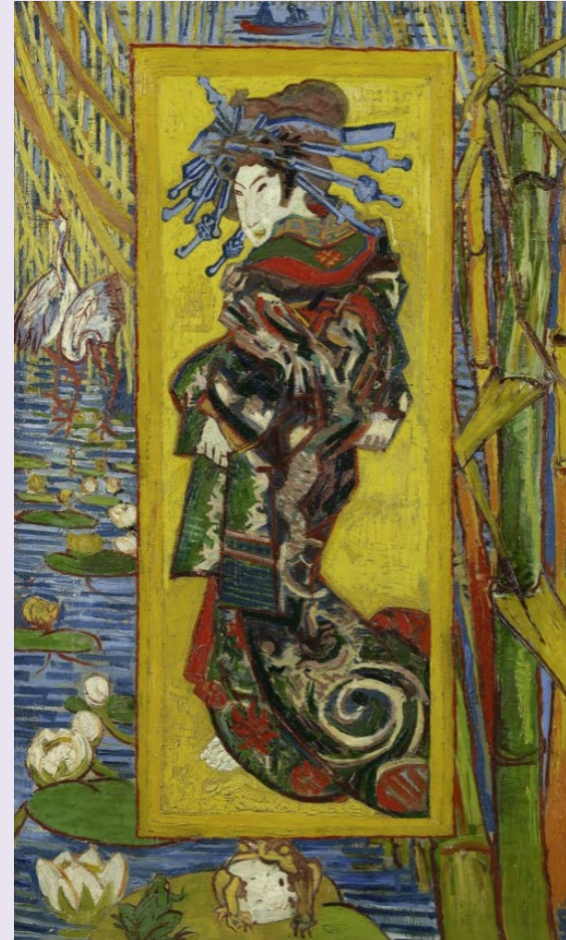


Flowering plum orchard: after Hiroshige,
Van Gogh, 1887

U3A Term 3 Week 3



Plum Park in Kameido,
Hiroshige, 1857



Courtesan: after Eisen
Van Gogh, 1887



Eisen, reproduced in *Paris
Illustré le Japon* in 1886

Van Gogh and Hiroshige



Vincent van Gogh, Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige), oil on canvas, 1887. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. Detail.

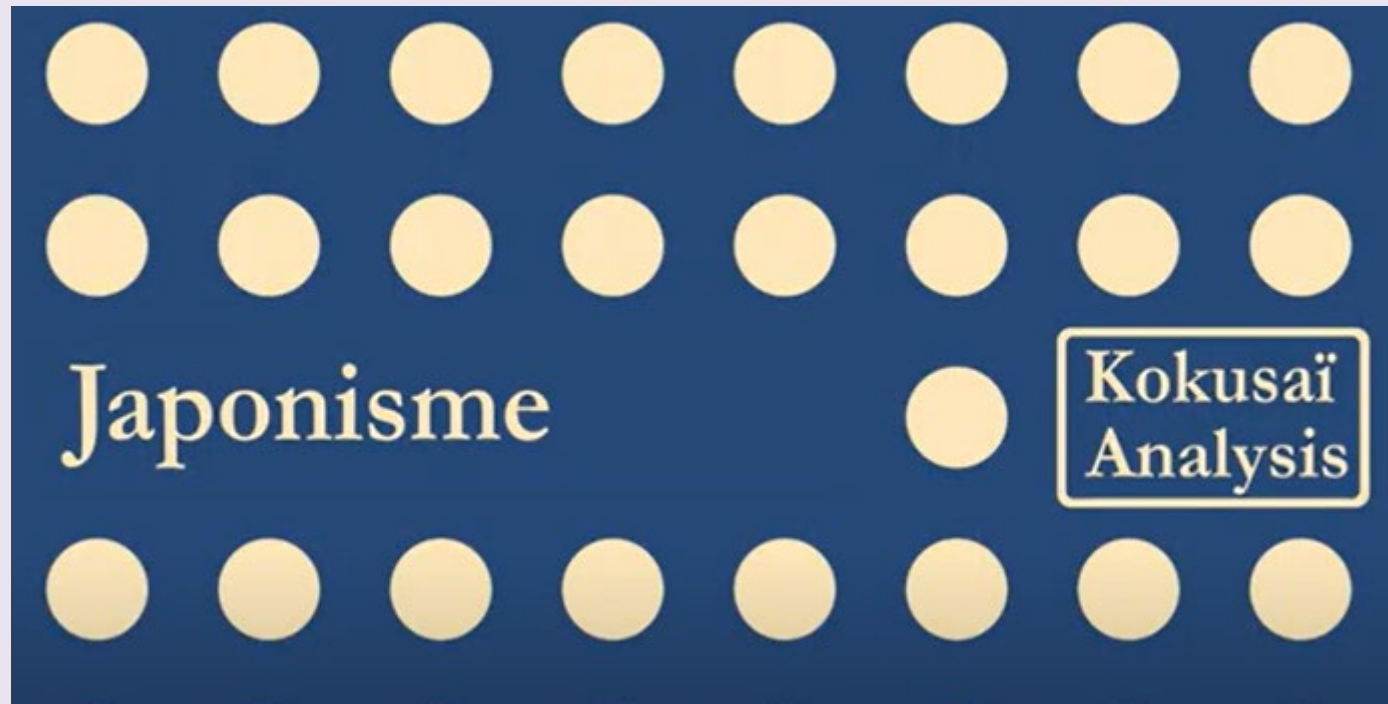


Utagawa Hiroshige, Sudden Shower over Shin-Ohashi Bridge and Atake from the series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, color woodblock, 1857, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA.

The impact of Japonisme: a short summary

Japonaiserie → Japonisme

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1tt3Xpf8Lo> 7 minutes



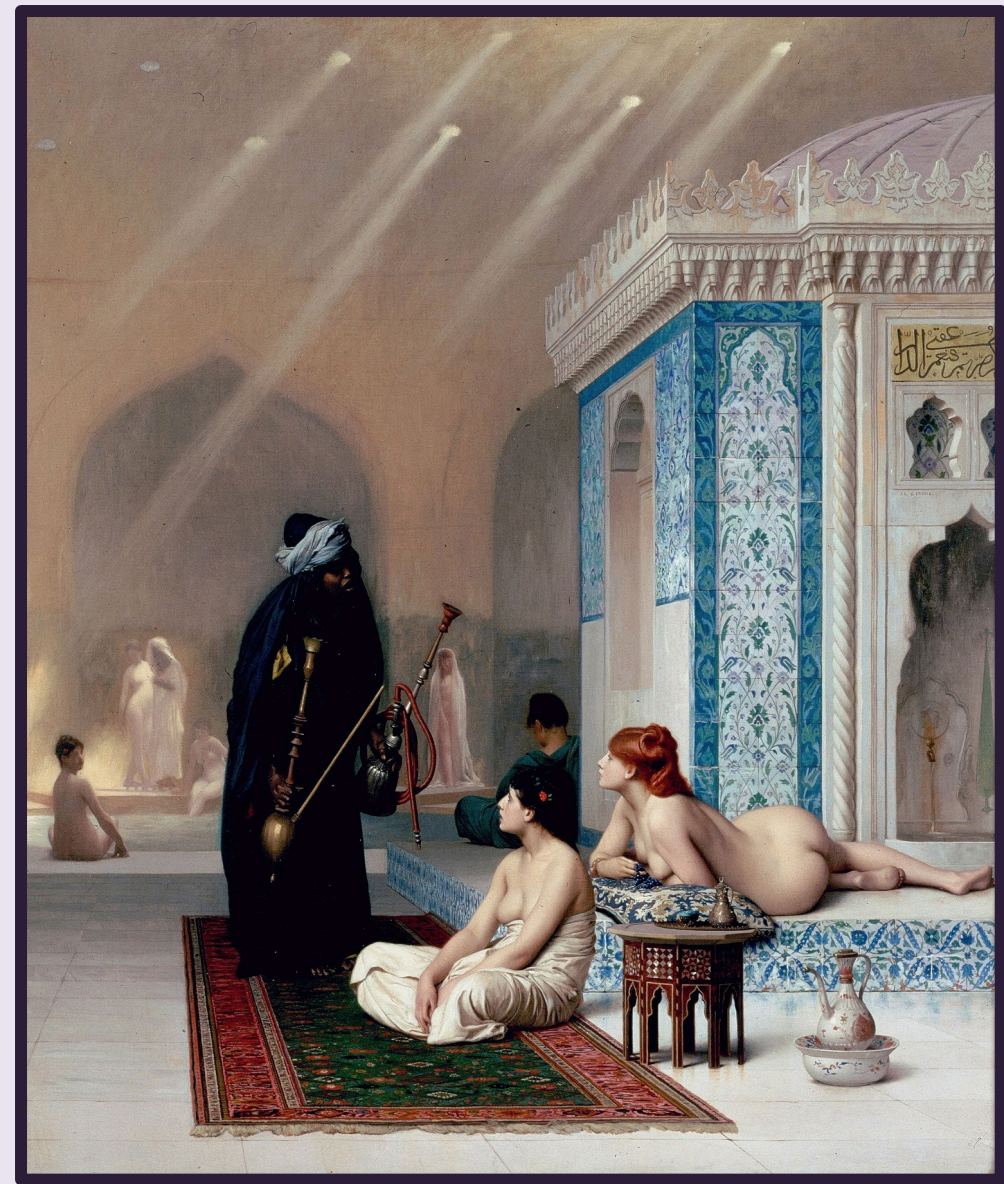
Japonisme as Orientalism?

Orientalism: representing the East through a Western lens

**Often romanticized or stereotyped Asian, Middle Eastern,
and North African cultures**

Japonisme as a form of Orientalism

Key difference: perceived refinement of Japanese culture



Pool in a Harem (1875)
Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904)

Japonisme as Cultural Appropriation?

Cultural appropriation refers to borrowing elements from another culture without respect or context

Common when dominant cultures adopt from marginalized ones

Japonisme both admired and simplified Japanese culture

Modern parallels in fashion, music, art



Festival goers enjoy the atmosphere prior to the 2013 Glastonbury Festival at Worthy Farm on June 26, 2013 in Glastonbury, England.
Ian Gavan/Getty Images

<https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/bass-coast-festival-headress-native-american-6188660/>

Week 3 wrap-up