

# The world of the Japanese Woodblock Print

## Week 8 Jacoulet's late career (1945-1960)

U3A 1 September 2025 Michael Harrington

# Week 8 outline

Week 7 review

Post-war success

NY agent

Jacoulet's art

technical sophistication

imaginative subjects

“bridging” East and West

QAG preview



# The war years (1940-1945)

- Moved to Karuizawa (in 1944) with other foreign nationals.
- Little work done. Subscription list dwindled, materials difficult to procure
- House in Tokyo firebombed, with loss of many documents, painting and photos
- Supposedly survived raising chickens and vegetables, did well on the black market, helped orphanage

During the war he was under constant surveillance by the Japanese police, who regarded him as one of the strangest of all foreigners.

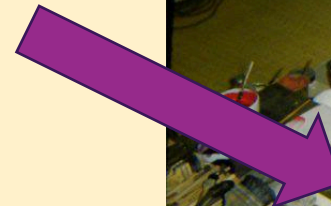


# Jacoulet, 1946–1950: Career revival under US occupation of Japan

- Networks through US GHQ restart his career after WWII
- GHQ sponsors a major 1946 exhibition and other exhibits
- Audience shifts to Allied personnel; subscriptions revive



Navy Capt. Henry Hutton  
Smith





# Career rebound

- **TIME (May 1946) hails the Fifth Air Force show as the 'hit of the Tokyo art season**
- **Opera program cover for 'Madama Butterfly' (GHQ-sponsored production, Imperial Theatre)**
- **Visits by the MacArthur and Ridgway visits by the MacArthur and Ridgway families to Karuizawa studio**
- **Results in rising U.S. subscriber base and institutional interest**

# TIME (May 1946) hails the Fifth Air Force show as the 'hit of the Tokyo art season'

<https://time.com/archive/6783799/approved-by-the-air-force/>



When he is not tending his chickens or designing prints, Jacoulet chases butterflies (he has 100,000 specimens).

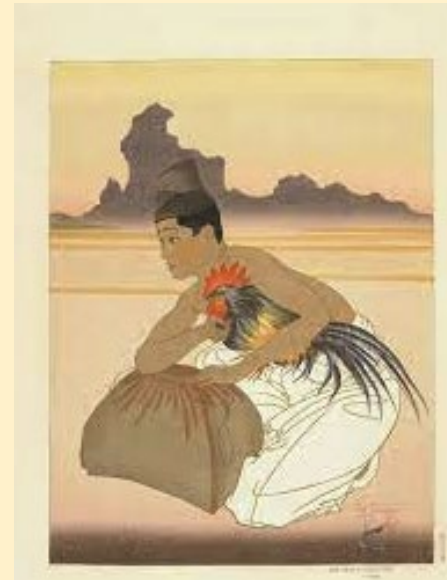
Any Japanese connoisseur who saw the Army's exhibit last week would be quick to point out that Jacoulet is more of a craftsman than a draftsman. Compared with Utamaro and Hokusai, the old masters of print-making's great period (1600-1867), Jacoulet's designs have a long way to go. But he is reviving interest in a vanishing art, and for that, all Japanese patrons of prints could be grateful.





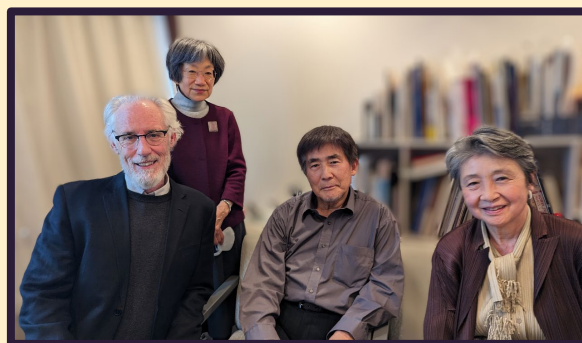
Created by Jacoulet for the 1948 Imperial Theater (Tokyo) production of Madame Butterfly, presented under GHQ auspices.

# The start of the Korean War 1950-1953





# The Karuizawa years 1944-1960



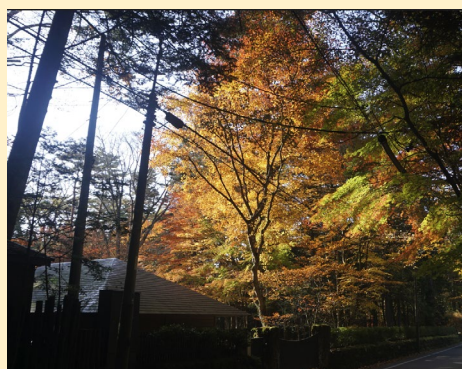


# Jacoulet compound in Karuizawa

November 2023



Tomita (Rah's Japanese name) Jacoulet







摺師本多鉄之助と 軽井沢 1946 年  
With Printer Honda Tetsunosuke, Karuizawa, 1946.




大島へのスケッチ旅行 1953 年 2 月  
A sketch trip to Oshima Island, February, 1953.

# Jacoulet in the New York art world

**PAUL JACOULET**  
an Artist of East and West

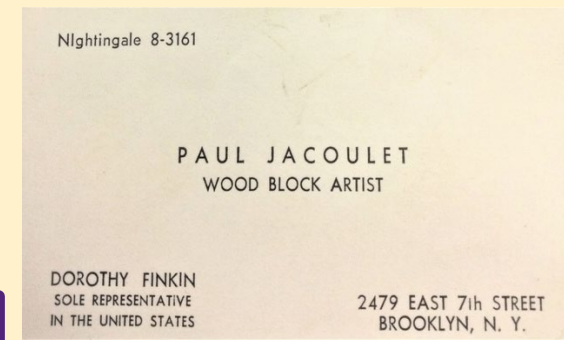
Jacoulet, a Frenchman by birth, has been living in Japan since the age of four and he has just celebrated his fiftieth birthday. He not only has mastered the difficult technique of wood block printing that the Japanese have done for centuries but he has added something of his own French spirit. It is rare to find an occidental expressing himself in Japanese terms, but Jacoulet has done this and as a result he has made a great contribution to the world of art.



Jacoulet's average design employs 15 to 20 colors and there are many that have up to 300 colors; a separate block of wood being required for each color. Metals are combined with the paint — gold, silver, platinum to give richness and luster to costumes and flowers. The paper is hand made and the artist limits himself to 120 original signed prints and destroys the blocks.



Dorothy and her husband Michael Finkin with  
Jacoulet circa 1948



New York City, circa 1955



## Cover letter for the bequeathal to the Harn Art Museum, University of Florida, of Jacoulet-Finkin correspondence



September 24, 2010

Re: The Jacoulet-Finkin Correspondence

In 1946, I, Michael Finkin moved from New York City to Tokyo, Japan to undertake the management of a thirteen branch library system in Japan (which was originally under the U.S. State Department, then transferred to GHQ, the U.S. occupation authority). This system catered to the Japanese public and was part of the democratization program.

One of the branch libraries was near Karuizawa, the home of the artist Paul Jacoulet, a French national who was a celebrity in the Japanese art world. On one of my regular branch visits, Miss Baker, a local staff member suggested I should meet Jacoulet, which I did and a friendship developed.

In September 1947, my wife Dorothy Finkin and our children arrived in Japan. She subsequently met and also became a friend of Jacoulet.

In August 1949 we returned to New York. Dorothy became Paul Jacoulet's New York agent in 1951 which relationship continued through 1957. During this period Paul wrote many letters to my wife Dorothy. These letters were addressed to me although I was not involved with my wife's representation of him and it was Dorothy who was writing to Paul. Although Jacoulet's letters contain much information and instructions regarding sale of his art, they also focus on family matters, finance his health and state of mind.

Dorothy's representation of Jacoulet was vigorous and faced constant rejection by the art world. Critics in New York called it "poster art" refusing to take it seriously. Many refused to accept that a Frenchman could be a leading exponent of a Japanese art form. Auction houses and galleries were dismissive. She arranged shows at the Guild Theatre and elsewhere, gave lectures, appeared on TV and tirelessly visited up scale decorators and potential buyers, often with little success. Years later Paul Jacoulet became accepted but this was long after his death.

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Michael C. Finkin



12 LONG ISLAND DAILY PRESS, TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 1952 By JANE GREGG

### They Met in Japan

## Housewife Represents French Artist in U.S.

Six years ago Dorothy Finkin met Paul Jacoulet, the French artist, in Japan.

At that time, her husband, Michael, was attached to the Tokyo information center which functioned under General MacArthur.

Today, 50-year-old Jacoulet, played by the French Embassy in Tokyo.

During the war he was placed under house-arrest and much of the recurring illness he suffers today is blamed on hardships suffered during those food-short years.

"Paul has always been sick," said Mrs. Finkin.

"South Seas," while other depict the people of China, Japan and Korea.


CLARE LUCE, Edward G. Robinson and an Ambassador Grew are of pearl and mica. The result is the "stunning beauty" Mrs. Franklin said. "Many consider that no print first saw when Jacoulet showed her

others. One print contained almost 600 different color shadings.

Besides the conventional colors, Jacoulet uses rare metals—gold, silver and platinum—and mother of pearl and mica. The result is the "stunning beauty" Mrs. Franklin said. "Many consider that no print first saw when Jacoulet showed her

# DOROTHY FINKIN'S

## Lecture on Paul Jacoulet



### His Art and Works

The creative work of this very unusual artist, Paul Jacoulet, is being presented throughout the United States by his friend and American representative, Dorothy Finkin. Mrs. Finkin is an American woman, who spent several years in Japan where she met Jacoulet and became interested in his work. When she returned to the United States, she was determined to make the name and work of Jacoulet as well known here as it is in other parts of the world. She has given many lectures and arranged for exhibits in many museums including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, State Museum in Springfield, Ill., Metropolitan Museum in New York City, Seattle Art Museum, etc. His print collections are also in leading museums and libraries throughout this country.

Among the subscribers and collectors of Jacoulet prints are such personalities as: Pope Pius, Queen Juliana, Winston Churchill, Greta Garbo, Edward G. Robinson, Clare Booth Luce, Mrs. Douglas MacArthur and Ex-Ambassador Grew. The trend now is to use Jacoulet prints for interior decorating purposes and among the important New York City decorators that use them are John Wisner, Dora Brahms, Edith Gecker and Gladys Miller.

#### COMMENTS


"The Hit of the Tokyo Art season"  
Time Magazine

"His range of color is extraordinary"  
Prof. R. Iglehart, N.Y.U.

"There is harmony to delight the soul"  
Interior Design

"Sociological and historical interest in subject matter"  
Press-Journal, Englewood, N. J.

"Figures have three-dimensional quality"  
N. Y. World Telegram and Sun



of the most useful wedding presents she received, she says.

## Wood Block Art Of Japan Revived

One of the most ancient of Japanese arts has been revived by a Frenchman, Paul Jacoulet, wood-block artist.

Mr. Jacoulet has spent most of his life in Japan and his prints closely resemble those of the artists working in the land of his adoption. His figures have more of a three-dimensional quality, however, than do those drawn by the Japanese.

For many of the more than 300 prints in his present collection, Mr. Jacoulet uses several hundred different blocks. He introduces gold, platinum and mother-of-pearl to give richness and luster to costumes and flowers.

Each print is signed and Japanese characters indicate the names of the various artisans who contributed to the finished work: wood carver; maker of the paper and mixer of colors. Tiny symbols—owls, leaves or ships—indicate the month in which the print was made.

Mr. Jacoulet's prints may be seen at the Hogarth Shop, 1033 First Ave. Prices range from \$10 to \$17.50.

New York World Herald & Telegram, May 1, 1952



January 12, 1953

Press release about  
Jacoulet exhibition at  
New York University.



News from . . . New York University, Office of Information Services

two-Paul Jacoulet

The artist limits his original signed prints to 120, and then destroys the blocks.

"His range of colors is extraordinary," Professor Iglehart declares. "The average design employs 15 to 20 colors, but Jacoulet has used up to 300. A separate wood block is required for each color. Metals are combined with the paint -- gold, silver, platinum, mother-of-pearl -- and the paper is hand made.

It is said that "the experimental first run of prints usually goes to papering the floor of the chicken house on Jacoulet's small estate outside Tokyo, which suffered some destruction from American raids during the last war. Making amends for this, the U.S. Fifth Air Force sponsored an exhibit of the artist's work in Tokyo in 1946."

- CM -



## They Met in Japan

By JANE GREGG

# Housewife Represents French Artist in U.S.

Six years ago Dorothy Finkin met Paul Jacoulet, the French artist, in Japan.

At that time, her husband, Michael, was attached to the Tokyo information center which functioned under General MacArthur.

Today, 50-year-old Jacoulet, a master of the woodblock, is internationally acclaimed and Mrs. Finkin considers herself lucky to be his American representative.

"We met Paul Jacoulet by chance when we were visiting Karuizawa, a mountain resort about a six-hour drive from Tokyo," she said. "Michael, my sons, Eugene and Matthew, and I visited Paul at his home near there and we became fast friends."

The Finkins returned from Japan in 1949, bringing with them a collection of Jacoulet prints. They now reside at 255-06 73rd avenue, Glen Oaks and Mr. Finkin is working as a Manhattan librarian.

Mrs. Finkin became Jacoulet's American representative only a few weeks ago, shortly after she exhibited her Jacoulet collection here.

Friends advised her that Jacoulet's work should be better known in this country and she wrote to the artist, hardly daring to hope he would consent to her representing him.

MRS. FINKIN has a complete set of Jacoulet prints. At present they number an even 100, though the artist hopes to complete an additional 50. Each subject is limited to 120 prints . . . then the blocks are destroyed.

Paul Jacoulet's delicately colored prints are heralded as "a revival of the vanishing art perfected by Utamaro and Hokusai, master printmakers of the 17th and 18th centuries."

Completely oriental in line and color, the prints are all the more amazing because they were produced by a Frenchman.

Though born in France, Jacoulet has lived in the Far East since he was a small boy. At 18 he was em-

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ployed by the French Embassy in Tokyo.

During the war he was placed under house-arrest and much of the recurring illness he suffers today is blamed on hardships suffered during those food-short years.

"Paul has always been sick," Mrs. Finkin said. "He traveled for his health in the South Sea when he was a young man. Many of his earlier works were done there."

One of his series is entitled

"South Seas," while other depict the people of China, Japan and Korea.

CLARE LUCE, Edward G. Robinson and ex-Ambassador Grew are ardent Jacoulet fans." Mrs. Finkin said. "Many consider that no print collection is complete unless it has a Jacoulet to bring it up to date."

Unique because each color is printed with a separate block, each print differs slightly from all

others. One print contained almost 400 different color shadings.

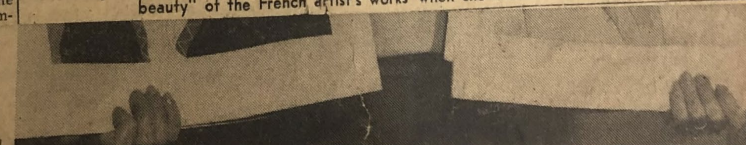
Besides the conventional colors, Jacoulet uses rare metals — gold, silver and platinum — and mother of pearl and mica. The result is the "startling beauty" Mrs. Franklin first saw when Jacoulet showed her

his work at Karuizawa.

"Because each has its own variations and due to their limited number, some of the prints are already collector's items," Mrs. Finkin said.



**STARTLING BEAUTY:** Mrs. Dorothy Finkin of Glen Oaks displays two from her collection of 100 Jacoulet prints, depicting the people of China, Japan and Korea. She was impressed by the "startling beauty" of the French artist's works when she first saw them in Japan.



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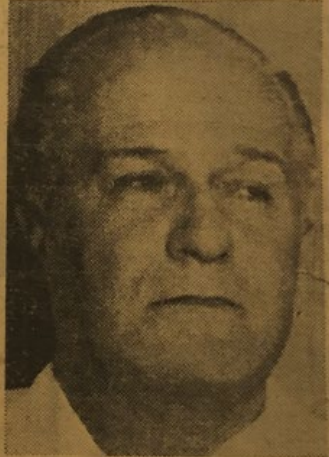


# Artist Takes Three Interests On Tour

Painting for wood cuts that have made him famous in Japan and overseas, and hunting butterflies are two of the three main interests of a French artist now in Perth.

His third great interest is his adopted daughter, Therese, a curly-headed 7½-year-old South Korean.

The Frenchman is Paul Jacoulet (right), who was a diplomat in France's Tokyo Embassy before he began painting professionally at 32 years of age.



He went to Japan with his father—Counsellor to the Imperial Household—and at five started the study of Japanese. After going through the full Japanese school system he graduated with a scholar's knowledge of written and spoken Japanese.

Until next May, when he will return to Japan, M. Jacoulet will tour Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands and the Americas.

His manager's job, while the artist is on tour, is to watch over his big house in the North Japanese highlands and direct the staff of carvers and printers making the wood prints.

"Everywhere I go I draw interesting types," said M. Jacoulet. "I am not a rich man. I must work. I spend too much. I like to spend. I like beautiful things."

And the butterflies—M. Jacou-

let said he had a collection of 500,000 butterflies.

He brought his secretary with him because Louis is a good butterfly hunter.

"Louis sneaks up on them," said a friend.

M. Jacoulet smiled. "My daughter is very intelligent," he said putting his arm around Therese. "She says I have come to draw, Louis has come to hunt, and she has come to spend money."

Therese is his manager's daughter and Louis is her uncle.

## A visit to Australia

1954



8.11.54 Perth

## Advocate Artist spotlight: Paul Jacoulet (2103)

<https://www.advocate.com/arts-entertainment/art/artist-spotlight/2013/03/30/artist-spotlight-paul-jacoulet>

Born in 1896 in Paris, Paul Jacoulet was a French, Japan-based woodblock print artist known for a style that mixed the traditional *ukiyo-e* style and techniques developed by the artist himself.

Jacoulet lived in Japan for most of his life. During World War II, he moved to Karuizawa, where he survived in the countryside by growing vegetables and raising poultry. Gen. Douglas MacArthur would join Greta Garbo, Pope Pius XII, and Queen Elizabeth II as a prominent collector of Jacoulet's work.

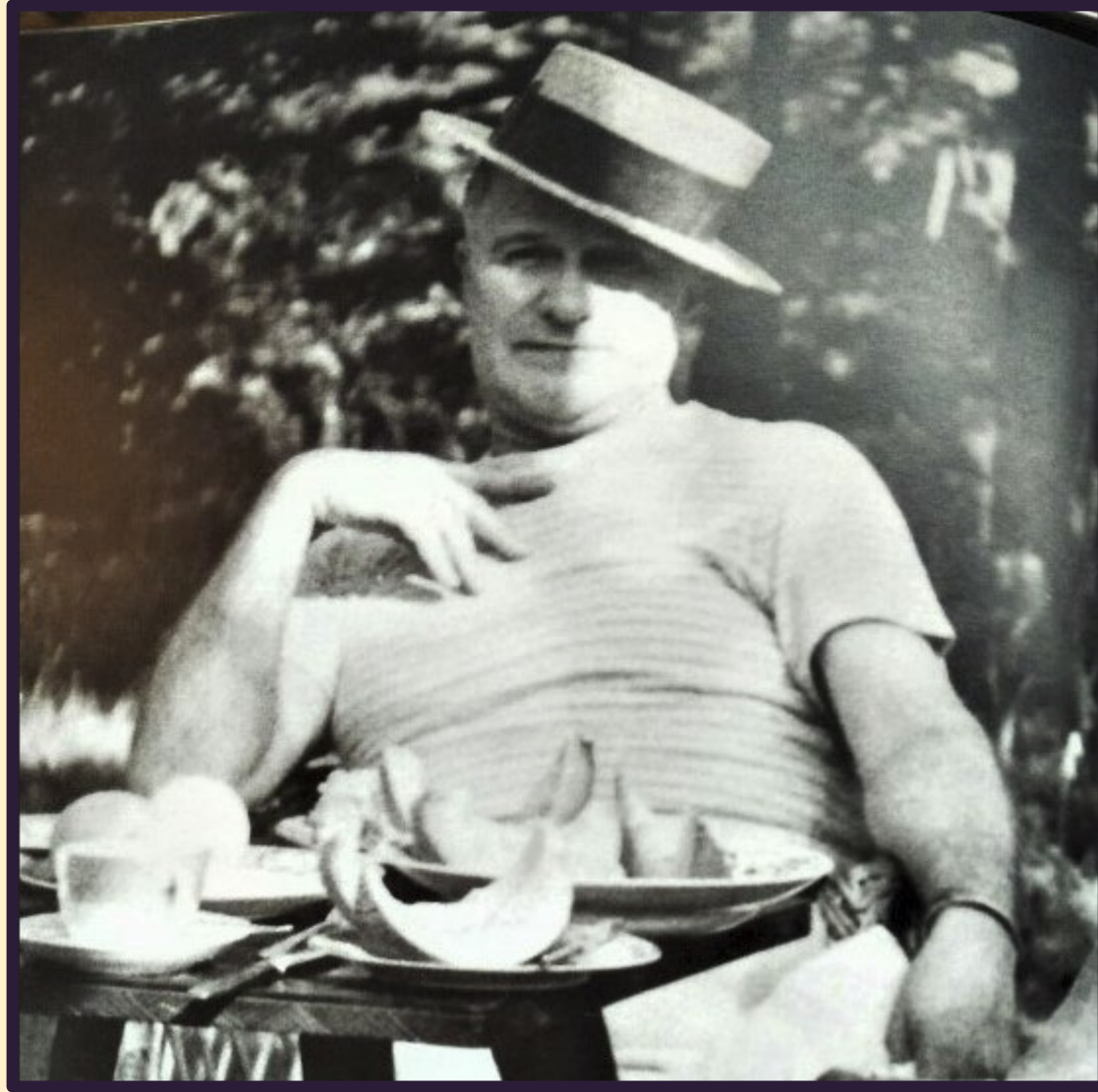
Many prints are very rare because all Jacoulet's pre-World War II work that had not already been taken out of the country by collectors was destroyed by fire. Jacoulet was a true renaissance man -- French but spending most of his life in Japan, expert in Kabuki, proficient on traditional Japanese musical instruments, a good calligrapher, conversant in several languages, and a recognized butterfly collector. Growing up in Tokyo he was the next door neighbor of *ukiyo-e* authority Yone Noguchi; he was taught English by Noguchi's American wife, Leonie Gilmour, and befriended their son, the young Isamu Noguchi. Jacoulet's father was an ambassador, so Paul was widely traveled and was doted upon by his mother. She supported his artistic endeavors all her life. She believed that if French Polynesia was good for Paul Gauguin, then Jacoulet must go there too. She sent him away many winters from Japan to various islands in Micronesia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

Jacoulet was a shameless self-promoter and sent prints to famous people to enhance his reputation. Mrs. Douglas MacArthur received an annual Christmas gift, and Jacoulet's work hung in the general's headquarters in Tokyo and later at the Waldorf-Astoria. Jacoulet was flamboyantly and openly gay at a time when that was not accepted. His sexual orientation and gender fluidity are clearly reflected in his work. Near the end of his life Jacoulet was barred from entering the U.S. due to his "undesirability" as a gay person. Undeterred, he dressed up in a white suit and, carrying a silver-headed cane, walked into the U.S. at Niagara Falls.



# The end

Last photo 1960



# Reception in Japan

Respect for craftsmanship; ambivalence toward a foreign designer

Debates framed by shin hanga vs sōsaku hanga priorities

Technical achievements noted in contemporary reviews

Postwar reassessments broadened appreciation

Ōta Memorial Museum of  
Art, Tokyo 2023 exhibit





# Reception Abroad

Collectors in the U.S. and Europe embraced finish and rarity

Museums acquired portraits; private collections expanded

Critical comparisons to Hasui and Shinsui for craft excellence

1980s scholarship consolidated his international stature

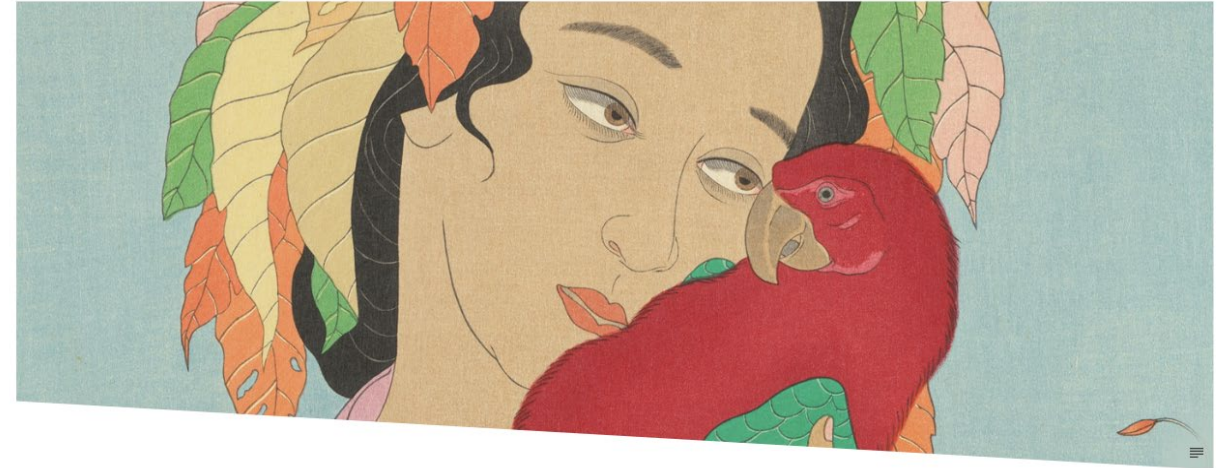
Still a market for his (rare) works

QAGOMA

Menu

What's On • Exhibitions

## Birds of Passage Ian Fairweather and Paul Jacoulet



Migratory birds travel long distances, from one end of the earth to another. They are known as 'birds of passage'; an expression that can also be applied to people. For artists Ian Fairweather and Paul Jacoulet, their journeys across Asia and the Pacific, in the first half of the twentieth century, influenced both the content of their work and their ways of making.

This display illustrates the influence of travel and cross-cultural experience on their respective works. Fairweather had a deep knowledge of Chinese art, while Jacoulet was committed to the craft of Japanese woodblock printmaking, and these qualities allowed both artists to act as a bridge between cultures.

### When

24 Feb 2024 – 26 Jan 2026

### Where

Queensland Art Gallery, Galleries 7 & 9 (Philip Bacon Galleries)

### Admission

Free

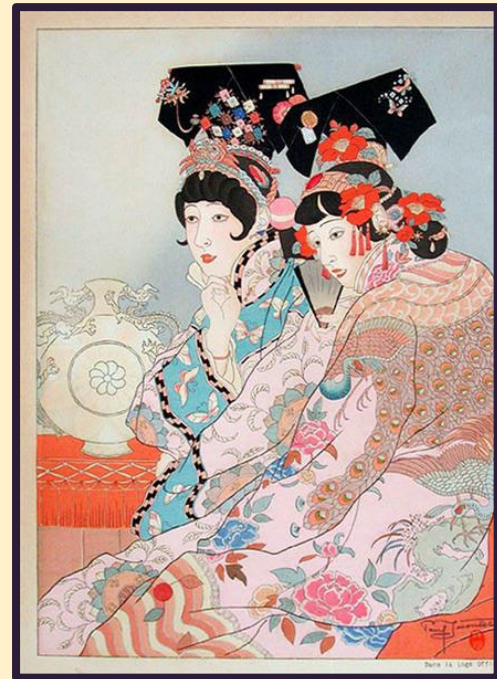
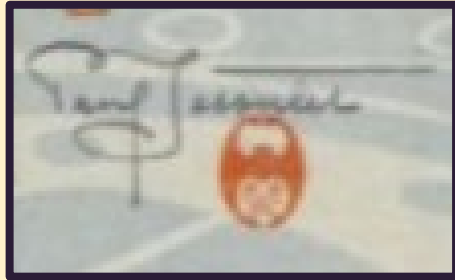
# Jacoulet's legacy

Three ways to consider Jacoulet's legacy:

- Artistic skill
- Technical sophistication
- Distinctive subject matter
- A “bridge” East and West

# Bat Series of Chinese Women (1942)

aka Manchurian Princesses Series

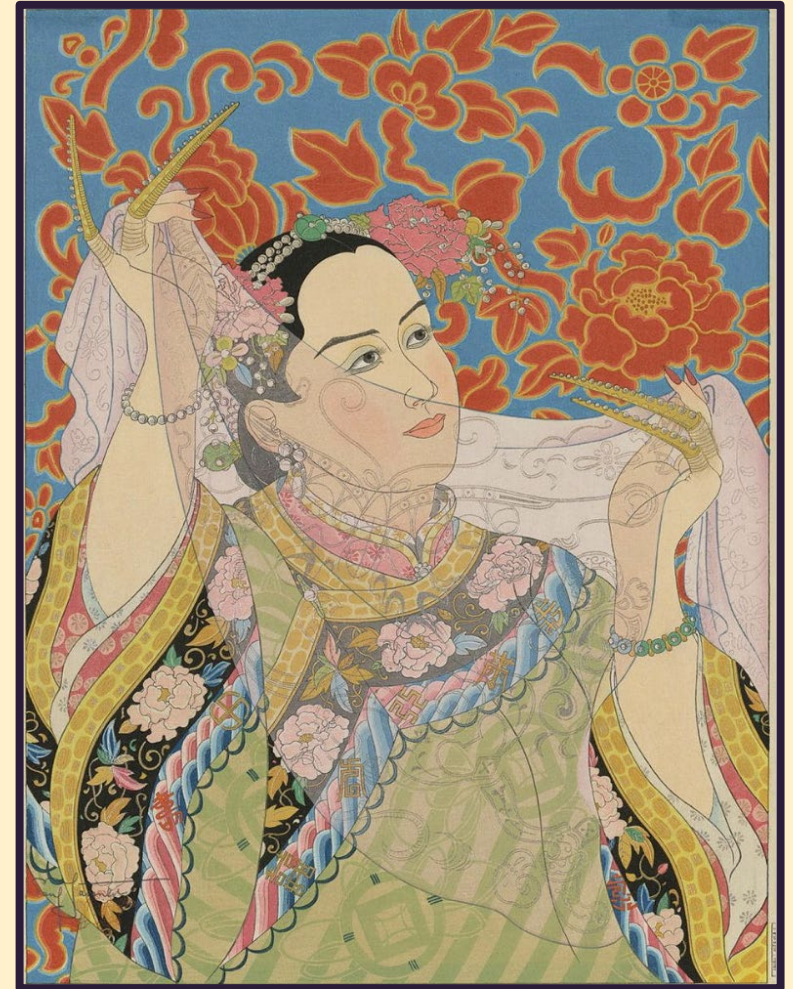




# The Pearl

Considered among the best of Jacoulet's work and the source of ongoing confusion as to the number of blocks and impressions that Jacoulet used.

Miles (1982, p115) says that the print require sixty blocks and 300 impressions, while Jacoulet (2020, p217) says that it required 300 blocks



# How many blocks?

- **60 blocks / 300 impressions → extreme but feasible.** Each block might be printed multiple times (for gradations, layering mica or lacquer, embossing, etc.).
- **300 blocks → essentially impossible.** Even with double-sided carving, you would need 150 cherry planks. No other shin hanga or ukiyo-e print on record comes close. As comparison: Hiroshi Yoshida's Grand Canyon (1925) is documented at ~80 impressions with fewer than 40 blocks. That's already considered astonishing .
- **No credible record of any Japanese, shin hanga, or Western mokuhanga artist using anything near 300 blocks.**

Artist	Period	Typical Blocks	Typical Impressions
Hokusai (1760–1849)	Ukiyo-e (18th–19th c.)	8–12	10–20
Hiroshige (1797–1858)	Ukiyo-e (18th–19th c.)	8–12	12–20
Utamaro (1753–1806)	Ukiyo-e (18th–19th c.)	7–10	10–15
Hasui (1883–1957)	Shin-hanga (20th c.)	12–20	15–30
Hiroshi Yoshida (1876–1950)	Shin-hanga (20th c.)	20–40	30–80
Paul Jacoulet (1896–1960)	Shin-hanga (20th c.)	30–60 (claimed 300)	50–300

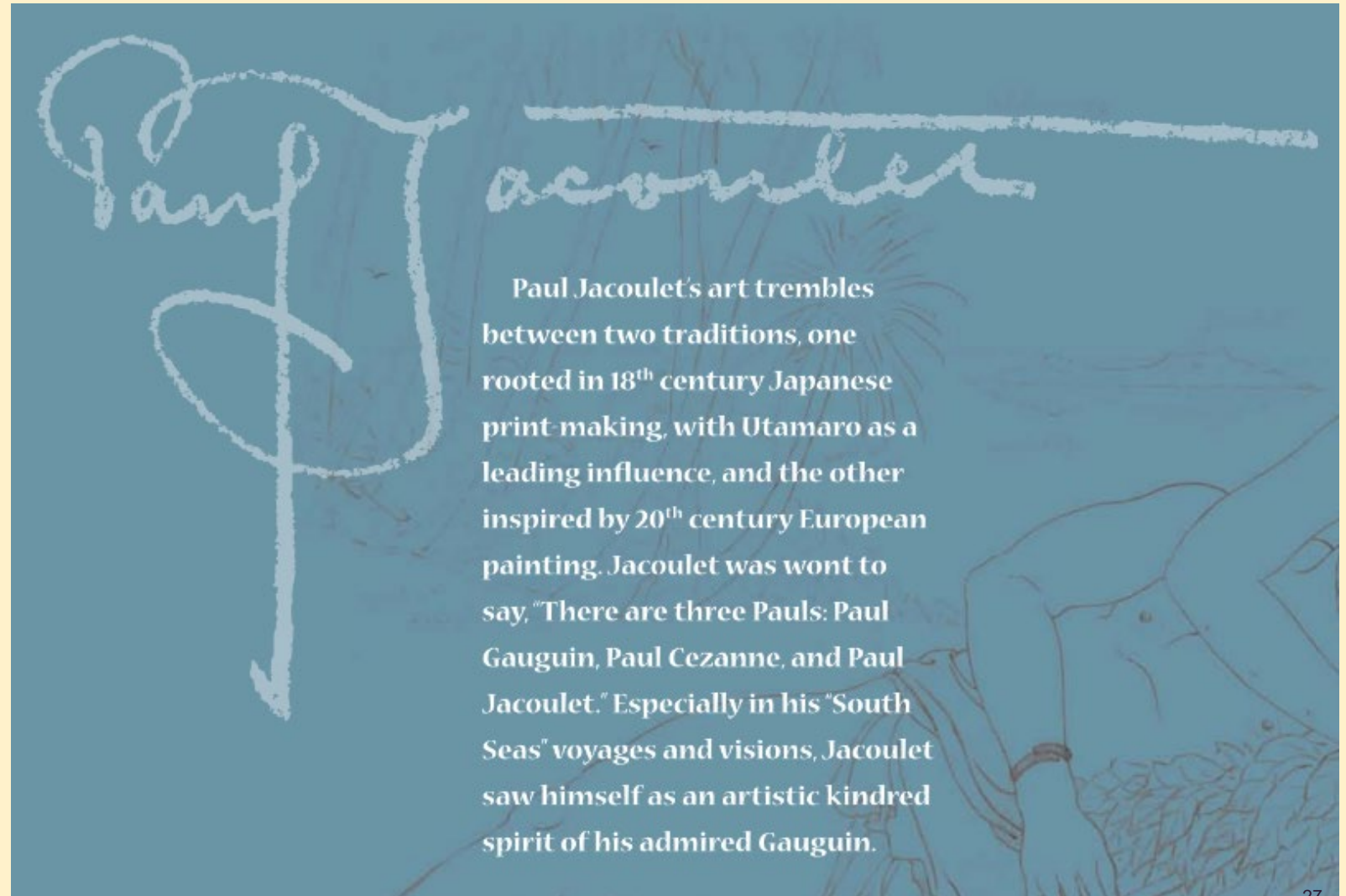
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29/8/2025

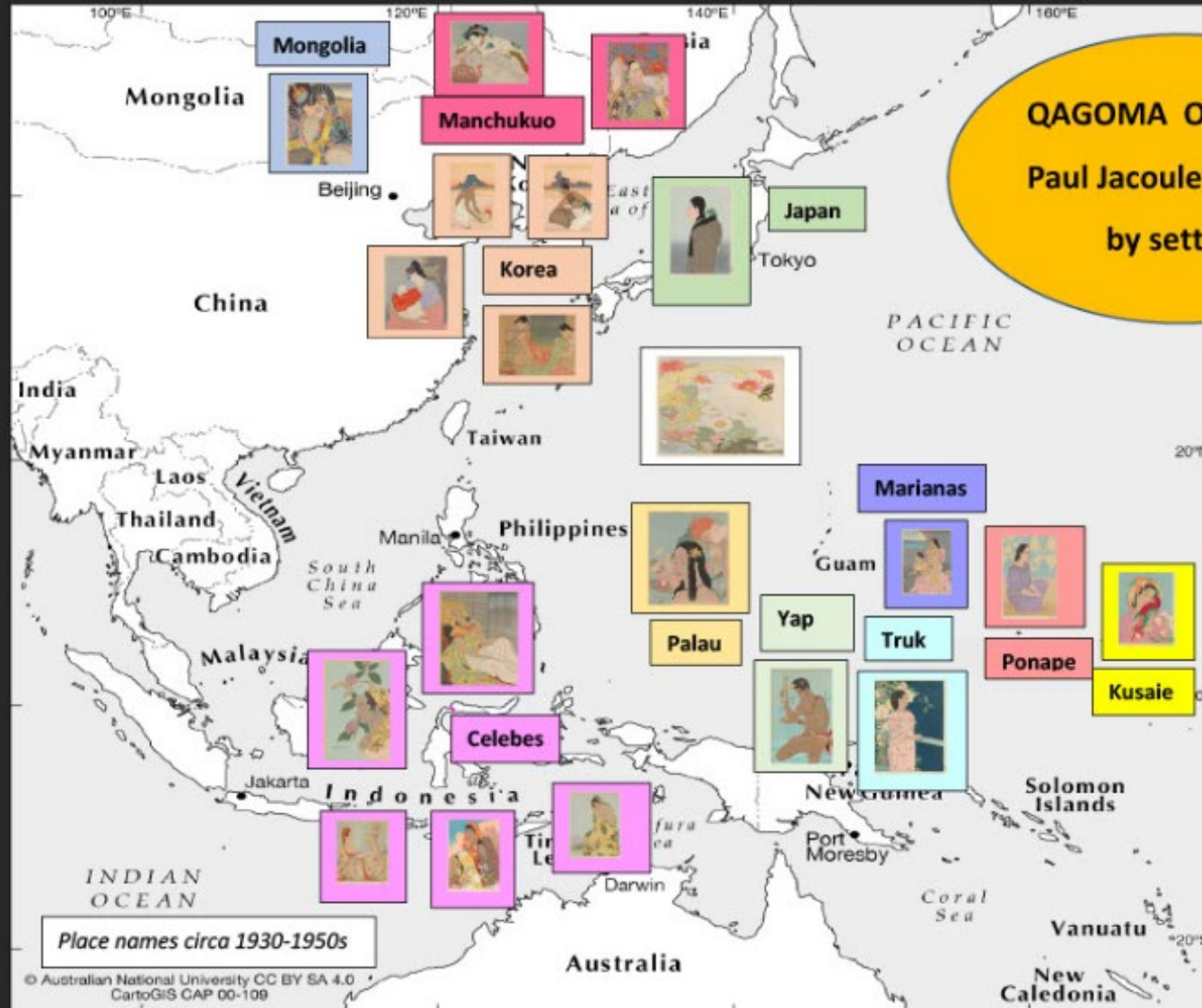
Yoshida Hiroshi ((1876–1950) The Grand Canyon, from the series The United States





## How do we classify the art and the artist?





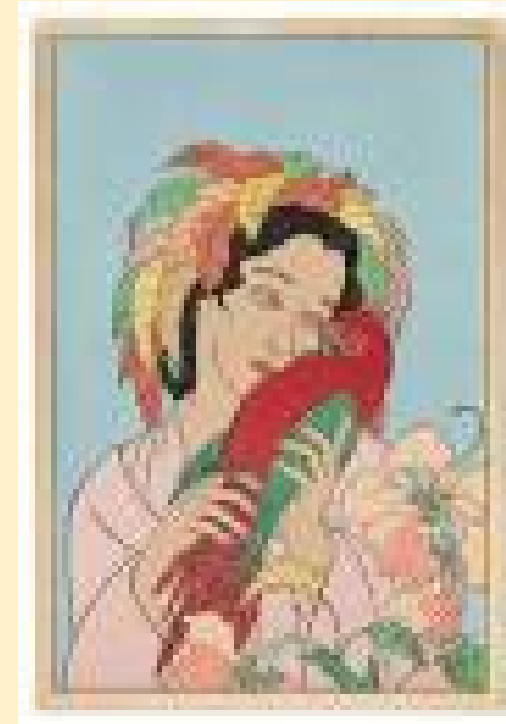
## QAG Birds of Passage, August 2025 (1)



50\_The New Dress  
Ponape, East Carolines



29\_A Downpour at Metalanim  
Ponape, East Carolines



70\_Sorrows of Love  
Kusaei East Carolines



## QAG Birds of Passage, August 2025 (2) West Carolines



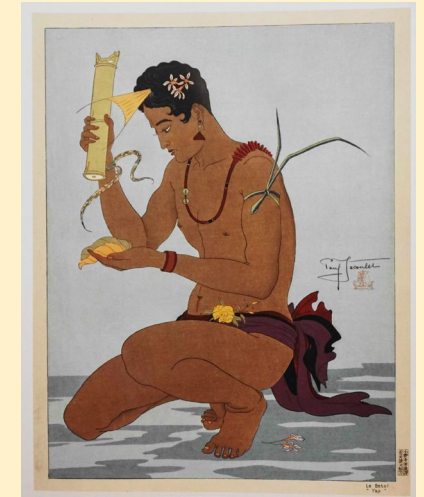
30\_A Beauty of Palao Palao,  
West Caroline



31\_A Yap Man  
Yap, West Carolines



132\_The Chief's Daughter  
Mogmog, West Carolines



64\_The Betel Nut Boy Yap, West Carolines

## QAG Birds of Passage, August 2025 (3) Japan & Korea



68\_Old Man with a Rosary  
Japan



66\_The Treasure Korea



40\_The Green Caterpillar Korea



## QAG Birds of Passage, August 2025 (4) North Asia



114\_The Star of the Gobi Mongolia



77\_The Gamblers-Chinese



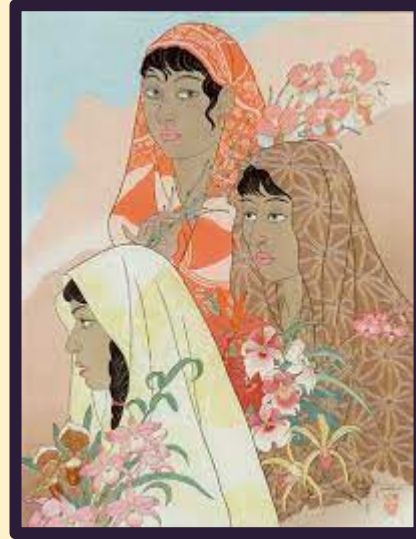
102\_Sandalwood Smoke Manchuko



## QAG Birds of Passage, August 2025 (5) Celebes (Sulawesi)

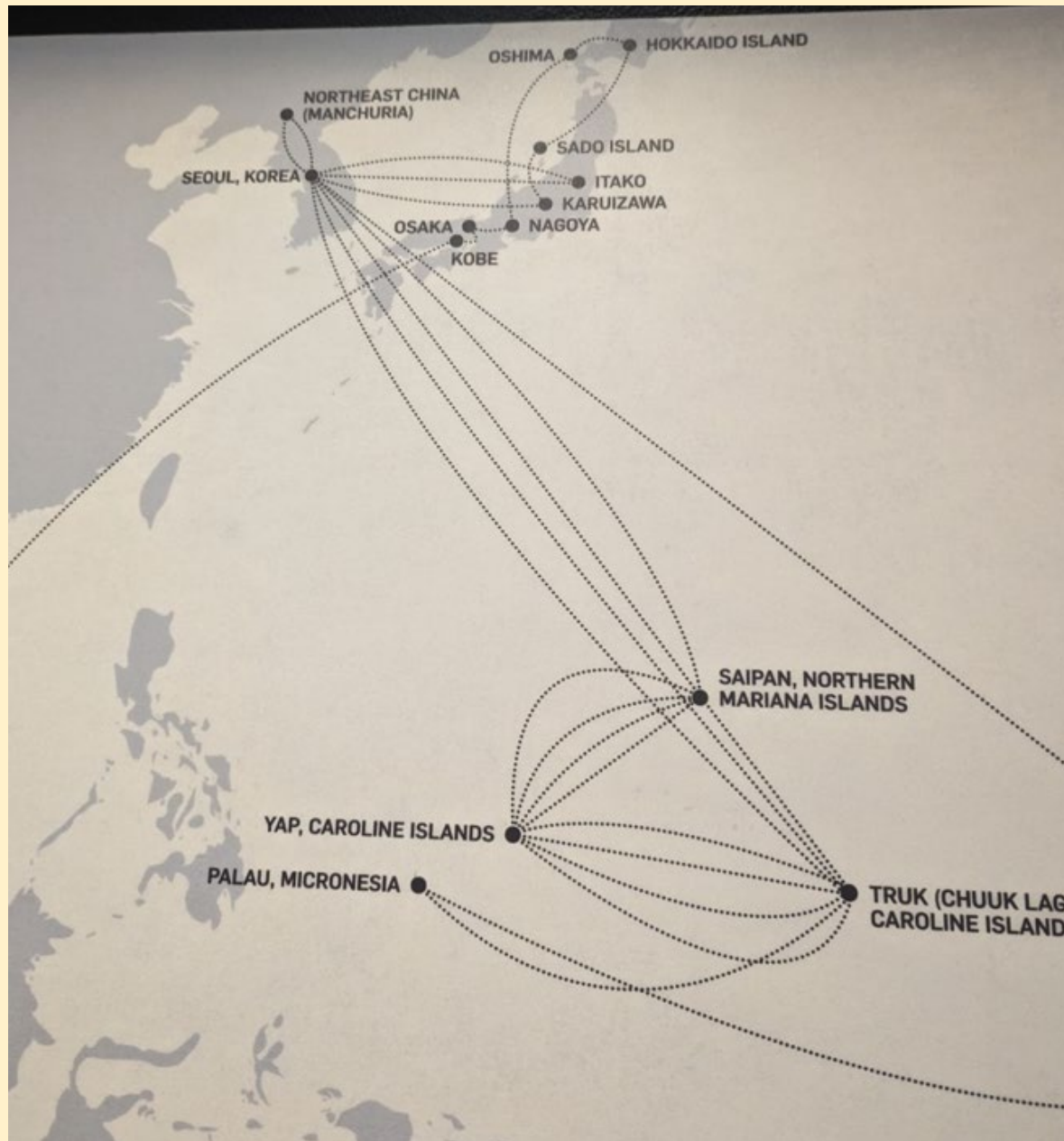


94\_The Dead Parakeet Celebes



90\_Return from the Jungle  
Celebes

## Jacoulet's South Sea voyages compared.



Un artiste voyageur en Micronésie L'univers  
flotant de Paul Jacoulet exhibition catalog,  
Paris 2013

# Jacoulet's place in art history

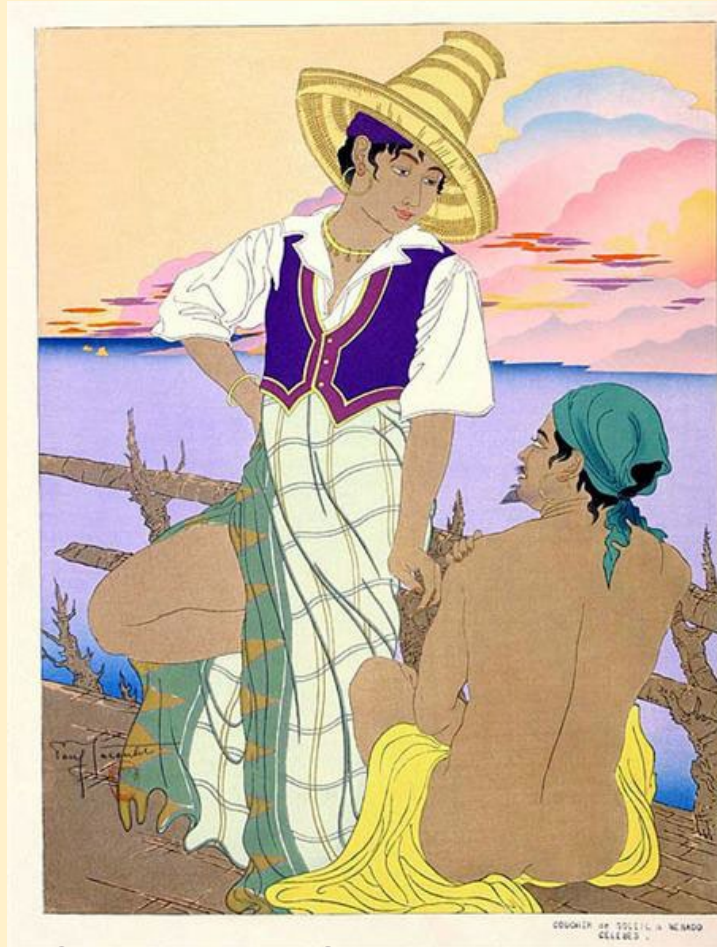
- Widely recognised for technical innovation in use of colours, material and technique.
- Critics invariably comment on the strangeness of subject matter.
- Prints have been variously described as
  - ethnographic documentation,
  - proto-psychedelic fantasy,
  - homoeroticism,
  - and kitsch.

See next slide <http://lacmaonfire.blogspot.com/2020/08/pacific-asia-museum-cancels-western-gaze.html>

How would you describe the art and the artist?



# Influences: Manet?



Coucher De Soleil A Menado.  
Celebes, 1938

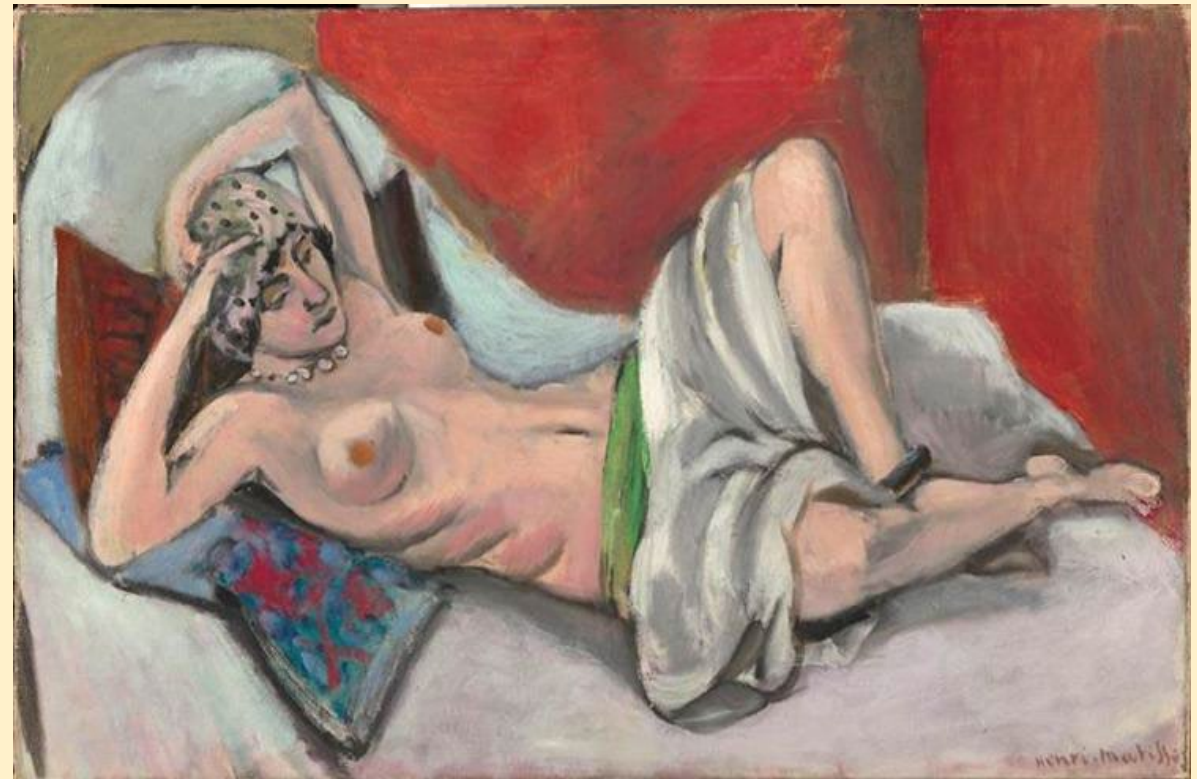


Édouard Manet, Luncheon on the  
Grass (Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe), 1863

# Influences: Matisse?



Premier Amour [初恋] Yap, Ovest  
Carolines, 1937



Draped nude, c 1922, Matisse



# Influences: Gauguin?



Jacoulet , Fleurs De Soir Truck  
– Toloas, 1941



Gauguin, Woman With a Flower/  
Vahine No Te Taire, 1891



Other influences suggested are Courbet, Millet, Giorgio de Chirico, Derain and Edvard Munch

# Week 8 wrap up