Master Thesis

Arts and Culture

Understanding Japanese Cool:

The Changing Role of Japanese Arts and Culture in the United States from the 1870s to Contemporary Times

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Introduction

Cool Japan. It was an exhibition on show in the Netherlands in 2017. After its soaring success at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden (14 April-28 October 2017), it travelled to the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam (28 September 2018-1 September 2019), then the following year was featured at the Museum aan de Stroom in Antwerp, Belgium (18 October 2019-10 August 2020).[1] The concept behind the exhibition was influenced by the craze associated with the phenomenon of the same name that characterized the Japanese image worldwide between the 1990s and 2000s.[2] The ultimate success of these exhibitions can be compared to the same infatuation that was experienced towards Cool Japan. The motivations behind the exhibition was to question what made Japan so cool. (**Appendix 1.**) This was answered by the featured objects that elaborated on when and how this fascination came into being. Inspired by the exhibitions of *Cool Japan*, this MA thesis examines the fascination towards Japanese visual culture by asking the same: Why is Japan cool?

By limiting the scope to the United States, the thesis looks at the three waves of Japanophilia that appeared as Japan became visible around the world.[3] The first wave occurred in the 18-19th centuries when European, and later American, artists discovered a uniquely Japanese aesthetic and visual culture. The second wave came arrived in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the American Occupation brought forth another fascination towards Japanese art and culture. The final wave of Japan craze is a more recent phenomenon characterized by the success of Cool Japan, which created another trend towards Japanese cultural products. While a fixation towards Japan appeared worldwide and the Western European contribution for the promotion of Japanese arts cannot be disregarded, the main focus here remains the role of the United States in promoting Japanese arts and culture into a world phenomenon.

[1] 87,500 people visited the Leiden exhibition, which has been seen as a major success and record in the museum's exhibiting history. See http://cooljapan.volkenkunde.nl/nl/pers/cool-japan-verlengd-tot-29-oktober.

[2] The significance of the Cool Japan phenomenon (examined in depth in Chapter 3) cannot be denied in relation to these exhibitions. Through its evolution in the 1990s-2000s, Cool Japan became part of a government sponsored program of cultural policy. Importantly, the creators of the exhibition series distanced themselves from the Japanese cultural policy of the same name with a disclaimer written in the colophon.

[3] Kelts, *Japanamerica*, 5. Kelts describes Japanophilia as the "outsiders' infatuation with Japan's cultural character".

Japan has been playing a major role in American imagination since the late 19th century. The country appeared increasingly in the public consciousness after its seclusion policy ended in 1854, which led Japan to contribute to world affairs and become a major world power. In order to revise the forcefully imposed commercial treaties (1854) with the United States amongst others, Japan followed a Westernization policy to elevate the country's recognition and get involved in beneficial trade relations. Besides the newly established Meiji government's domestic policies, Japan developed diplomatic relations with powerful Euro-American countries by focusing on an approachable foreign policy. However, through the course of over hundred-and-fifty years, the international relations between Japan and the United States were influenced by the changing world order that stressed their relationship repeatedly. A cyclical pattern of mutual harmony-rivalry-conflict sequence can be observed as a result of wars, and economic upheavals and downfalls that nourished and challenged the images of Japan in the US.[4]

This thesis elaborates on the shifting attitudes towards Japan in America by looking at how the inflow of Japanese arts and culture shaped American public opinion, and vice versa. One may argue that art and culture can be used as important tools in aiding cultural diplomacy. They are a form of 'soft power', a force to formulate a favourable and attractive attitude towards a country.[5] Japanese art has been used as a powerful instrument in constructing a positive image about the country by various contributors with differing motives throughout time.[6] At other instances, geopolitical and economic changes shaped American attitudes, which

[4] The First Shino-Japanese War (1894-1895), Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), World War I (1914-1918), and the Japanese invasion to Manchuria (1931-1932) were victorious for the Japanese state and enhanced the country's dominance around the world. World War II (1939-1945) resulted in a major defeat for the Japanese, after which Article 9 disabled active participation in military conflicts. Nevertheless, Japan's most recent participation involves the Iraq War (2003-2011) as an ally to the United States. In relation to economic development, the economic miracle of the 1970-1980s is important to mention, which culminated in the bubble economy (1986-1991), and was followed by the recession of the Lost Decade (1991-2001).

[5] Joseph Nye constructed the concept of 'soft power' first in his article of the same title published in 1990 in the *Foreign Policy* journal.

[6] At the beginning, the Meiji government became interested in the cultural nationalism-driven promotion of Japanese arts abroad, for instance at the world fairs and international exhibitions organized across Europe and the United States. In the meanwhile Euro-American Japan-enthusiasts, such as Edward Sylvester Morse and Ernest Fenollosa, created the very first collections of Japanese arts in the Western world, as in case of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Chapter 1). In the post-WWII era, one of the most significant promoters of Japanese art was John Davison Rockefeller III, whose efforts are described in Chapter 2. Cool Japan of the 1990-2000s was promoted by the Japanese government through the Intellectual Property Strategic Program (Chapter 3).

often resulted in lesser appreciation or acknowledgement. While art was an attitude-shaping tool at occasions, it changed to accommodate to the flow political factors.

This thesis explores the question what stakeholders were involved in the import of Japanese art and culture in the United Stated from the late 19th century to contemporary times, and what their contribution was to the construction of the Japanese image. By answering this question I explore what kind of Japanese arts were displayed in America in past events and contemporary occasions, which consequently contributed towards the image of Japan in American perception.[7] Another aspect to consider are the identity of the main stakeholders, who acted as major enforcers of the Japanese image throughout the centuries, such as the Japanese government, American museum professionals, or wealthy collectors. The thesis will be articulated based on the series of main events that constructed the Japanese image throughout time, which are divided into three sections inspired by the above mentioned phases of Japanophilia.

To answer these questions, Chapter 1 introduces the potential of art as an attitude-shaping tool by looking at world fairs and international expositions.[8] The Japanese realized the self-fashioning potential of these events, and participated in three major American fairs in 1876 (Philadelphia), 1893 (Chicago) and 1904 (St. Louis). These events were used as powerful platforms to promote unique, romanticized views of Japan, while also introduced Japanese arts to an emerging circle of enthusiastic Euro-American connoisseurs contributing to the Japan craze, a trend prevailing in European art circles during this period. The emerging interest towards Japanese art resulted in the establishment of the first museum collections outside Japan, which became important platforms for popularizing Japanese culture.[9] Chapter 1 focuses on the starting phase (1867-1919) of the inflow of Japanese culture that reached American masses and formulated a positive image of Japan in the United States.

Chapter 2 contributes to the attitude-shaping tendency of art by looking at the Cold War period (1945-1991), which showed different images of Japan as geo-politics demanded.

[7] Throughout the years, various forms of Japanese arts were promoted abroad. They could range from the high art of ancient Japanese tradition to the more recent mass-culture oriented pop art. Takashi Murakami's Superflat combines for instance the high art of museums with the commercialism of Cool Japan.

[8] World fairs were popular festivals organized in major Euro-American cities during the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries during which nation states exhibited their industrial and artistic achievements with culturally significant products to project a fashionable image of their country. The most influential fairs in Europe were the ones organized in London and Paris, such as the Crystal Palace Exhibition (1951) and the Exposition Universelle (1889).

[9] In America the most influential collections were that of the New-England-based Japan connoisseurs, such as Edward Sylvester Morse, Ernest Fenollosa, William S. Bigelow and Isabella S. Gardner.

Influenced by the events of World War II, anti-Japanese feelings impacted American attitudes towards the recognition, exhibition and consumption of Japanese art and cultural products. This chapter examines introduces the role of museum exhibitions in rehabilitating the positive image of Japanese culture in the post-war years. In light of WWII, the American Occupation and the Japanese economic miracle, this chapter elaborates on what the Americans considered Japanese art and culture, and how it was influenced by political climate and international relations.

While the events described in Chapter 1 formulate the image of Japanese high art, post-war attitudes cater increasingly to public preferences through popular culture. Chapter 3 continues with this trend by focusing on the increasing popular orientation of Japanese arts and culture in America as a result of globalization. The Superflat movement of Japanese pop art is introduced, which heavily draws on the commercialized, mass-produced aspects of the Cool Japan subculture. Critical tone on contemporary and past issues characterizes the arts connected to this movement, which dominated the contemporary Japanese art scene.[10]

In regard to literature, Said's books of 1979 and 1993 were the first to contain the useful concepts of Orientalism and Otherness. Orientalism can be defined as the seeing of the other through assumed interpretations, which have been formulated as bases of an imagined and not fully understood identity that are resistant to alteration. Orientalism is a cultural myth expressed through stereotypes that imagine the East as strange and other. The Orient, which includes Japan, is generally viewed as passive, backward, primitive and queer through the eyes of the Euro-American Occident, the West. In relation to Japan, American images and metaphors continuously shifted through the centuries as an impact of international relations, which will be referred to through the thesis.[11] Secondly, important pieces of literature fall into the collective category of *nihonjinron*, the 'discourses on Japaneseness'. *Nihonjinron* deals with Japan's own obsession with its individuality, ethnic homogeneity and cultural uniqueness, which cannot be comprehended by outsiders. Similarly to Orientalism, the Japanese make a distinction between 'self' (*uchi*) and other (*soto*), however, they limit such discriminations within national boundaries. Yoshino's book (1992) is important to highlight, since he was the first to link *nihonjinron* to cultural nationalism.[12]

[10] Superflat derives from the socio-cultural changes happening in Japan's lost decades of stagnating economy (1990s-2000s). This movement is also heavily influenced by the post-war period, which is examined in detail in Chapter 3.
[11] Rosen, "Japan as Other". http://www.immi.se/intercultural/.
[12] Shani, *Consuming the Nihonjinron*, 1-3. Shani highlights Yoshino's argument that cultural nationalism "aims to regenerate the national community by creating, preserving or strengthening a people's cultural identity when it is felt to be lacking, inadequate or threatened." (Yoshino 1992, 1.) In my thesis this quoted aspect of promoting Japanese culture in America is carefully considered in

Each chapter is based on a wide range of secondary literature. Iriye's edited volume (2013) has been useful in understanding Japanese-American relations through the construction of images – how one viewed another with reference to changing geopolitics. The excessive theses of Langlois (2004), Cho (1998), Murai (2003) and Chen (2000) examine the first instances of Japanese arts arriving in America. Cohen (1992) is a valuable source: his description on the arrival of Japanese arts to America references the most important museums and collectors of Japanese art in the 19-20th centuries. Dower (1986), Johnson (1988) and Shibusawa (2006) provide a massive database of knowledge in relation to how WWII and post-war constructed Japanese stereotypes in America. Shimizu's article (2001) on the state of exhibition culture of Japanese arts in American museums has been greatly influential in understanding what image of Japan was promoted during post-war. Favell (2011), Allison (2006) and Kelts (2006) provide comprehensive accounts on the rise and fall of Cool Japan through the examination of its characteristics. Iwabuchi (2002) places Japan's recent cultural expansion in the framework of globalisation, which contributes towards the full understanding of Cool Japan. McGray (2002) and Nye (1990) have been highlighted within the thesis, as they have been influential towards the perception and promotion of Cool Japan. Lastly, Murakami's exhibition catalogues (2000; 2005) were useful sources to comprehend Superflat, as their visual properties added to the analysis of this aesthetic.

Overall, with the use of the mentioned sources, this thesis reveals the identities of the most significant stake-holders who promoted Japanese arts and culture in America. The time-frame being between circa 1876 and 2011, the nature of Japanese art and culture has been impacted by many external and internal factors of change, all interrelated to the other. With the aim to discover patterns to these shifts and the alternating American perceptions in relation to them, the thesis can imply what the future might hold towards the presence of Japanese arts and culture in the United States.

relation to the shifting images how Japan aimed to self-fashion itself through traditional-, and popular sources of art and culture.

Chapter 1:

World Fairs, Connoisseurs and the Museum: Japanese Culture in America between the 1870s and 1910s

Japan followed a policy of seclusion during the regime of the Tokugawa shogunate, the prevailing military-style government between 1603 and 1868. However, in 1854 Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858), American naval commander succeeded in negotiating treaties between the Japanese and Americans, which gave the base for Japan's complete opening up to the West. Prior this only limited trade existed between Japan and the world. Favouring diplomacy over war, the Japanese signed unequal commercial treaties that consequently needed revision. After the fall of the Tokugawa government in 1868, the Meiji Restoration brought forth political, social and economic reforms and restored the ruling power to the emperor.

While pre-Meiji sentiments worked in opposition to the incoming Western influence and followed the slogan of "revere the Emperor and expel the barbarians" (*Sonnō jōi*), the government decided on a completely opposite approach. The new direction in politics followed the "strengthen the army and enrich the country" (*Fukoku kyōhei*) saying: officials believed that Japan needed the power of the West – in terms of military, economic and commercial influence –, in order to confront the threats imposed by the unequal treaties.[13] To achieve treaty revision, Japan followed a Westernization policy to understand, implement and surpass Western models of civilization.

From the Meiji Restoration to the early 1880s, the Japanese government employed foreign experts, studied Western materials, and developed the education system based on European model. The Meiji government worked on the image of Japan to be a fellow Westernized country in order to be accepted as equal to the civilized West. This chapter shows that international fairs were important testing grounds for implementing this newly-constructed Japanese image by looking at the three largest exhibitions in the United States that shaped the popular knowledge over Japan. Differences can be observed over what kind of Japanese image was projected during the Centennial Exhibition of Philadelphia (1876), the World's Columbian

[13] Cho, *Selling of Japan*, 49, 54.

Exposition of Chicago (1893) and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition of St. Louis (1904), as these events were all dependent on the changing political climate and international relations.

One of the major shifts in Japanese self-fashioning abroad occurred due to a change in Japanese priorities over cultural representation. By the late 1880s, increasing national sentiments resulted in the re-evaluation of Japanese heritage and cultural legacy, which consequently stopped the favour towards the overwhelming Westernizing trend that neglected Japan's individuality. Interestingly, this emerging cultural nationalism was largely supported by American connoisseurs, many of whom were concerned over the loss of traditional values in the midst of Westernization. This chapter will introduce some of the main advocates of the Japan craze in the United States, whose dedicated enthusiasm shaped both Japanese and American cultural policies and public knowledge over Japanese arts and culture.

This chapter explores how the American attitudes towards Japanese culture changed from the 1870s to the 1910s. It analyses the two most influential ways through which general knowledge over Japanese culture was promoted within the US and reached the biggest audiences. One of these are the international expositions that took place repeatedly in bustling, industrialized and culturally significant centres like Philadelphia, Chicago and St. Louis, and provided a platform for the Japanese to represent their cultural achievements. The other promotion of Japanese culture happened in museums, whose newly emerging collections of Japanese, and in more generally Asian art underwent major developments. The historical formation of the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts will be carefully analysed as an example to use in finding an answer to what degree museums, besides the more public-oriented world fairs, enhanced the popularity of a foreign culture.

World Fairs: Cultural Platforms of Self-fashioning

World fairs are carefully controlled settings where countries display their culturally significant achievements. In these occasions each nation state aimed to present itself at its best to generate a positive reaction, awe and approval from the viewing audiences. While the hosting countries were generally part of the Occidental civilization, the Orient was also represented in a smaller scale mainly for entertainment purposes. Oriental state exhibits were meant to display virtual tours for the Western audiences who looked for an imaginative, exotic other. These occasions of fairs and expositions were spaces of international communications where nation states, extended with their colonies and imperial undertakings, exhibited themselves and sought

favourable response by other countries. World fairs were considered meeting places, where the cross-fertilization of different cultures and the merge of artistic traditions occurred.[14]

The first modern world's fair was the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations (also known as the Crystal Palace Exposition) in London (1851). It set a standard of what such an event should look like and was soon imitated by the French (1855, 1867, 1878, 1889 and 1900), who elevated the occasion into new heights with their scale and visitor number. Other cities, such as Vienna (1873), Brussels (1883, 1897), Dublin (1853), Florence (1861) and Amsterdam (1864) also followed in these footsteps, and the United States was no exception. Based on the successful examples of fairs hosted across Europe, the United States organized fairs where all major Western countries were invited, and less significant countries on the political spectrum also attended, including Japan.

Japan was a relatively unknown country that was first invited to participate at an American fair in the 1870s. Prior to the Centennial Exhibition (1876) there was limited interaction and little knowledge that reached American audiences about the country. Some information was transferred through periodicals and travelogues written by Americans, however, the fairs were the major scenes where American residents got familiar with the Japanese, their culture, history and art. Fairs also provided the opportunity for the Japanese government to define the impression they wanted to project towards the world, thus the fairs were significant events for the development of Japanese-American relations.[15]

Various motives played at hand for Japan to take part in world fairs, but the core reason to participate had political implications. When Japan first opened up its country to the American fleet led by Commodore Perry, it was forced to agree on a series of treaties, such as the 1854 Treaty of Peace and Amity and the 1858 US-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce. Similar treaties were signed with Britain, France, Russia and the Netherlands soon after. Such unequal treaties threatened Japan's international independence and domestic legitimacy, and their revision became the major goal of Japanese diplomacy. In order to re-negotiate them, Meiji government officials decided on using expositions as diplomatic aids in presenting Japan in favourable light. To achieve ultimate success, the government produced sophisticated programs for an effective national image.[16] During the late 1870s a Japan craze formulated in the United States that was not solely shaped by the Victorian Americans, who were inspired

[14] Holt, *Expanding World of Art*, 1-2.
[15] Harris, "All the World a Melting Pot*"*, 25.
[16] Langlois, *Exhibiting Japan*, 29-32.

by the European movement of what the French had labelled Japonisme, but was consciously promoted by the Japanese themselves.[17]

In reaction to Western expansionism and imperialism, the Japanese promoted Japan's newly emerged identity that was believed to raise the country's status among the hierarchy of nations. The new propaganda of "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika*) referred to the drastic measures of the Meiji government to successfully achieve Western standards of technology, and Westernized economic, social, educational and military systems.[18] The various displays of international exhibitions had the potential to narrate Japan's recent national progress and establish an idealized image of Japan in the West. Since the majority of the public was ignorant about the reality of Japan, Meiji officials deliberately engineered a Japanese utopia of a civilized nation with ideal culture and harmonious co-existence of arts and industry.[19] This image particularly appealed to the masses, who gradually grew disillusioned of their industrialized modernity that longed for the imagined beauty of an exotic Orient.

The Philadelphia exhibition was the first major fair hosted by the United States where the Japanese projected their ambitious image. The fair celebrated a great occasion, the national independence itself. Started in the summer of 1876, it ran for six months, however, the initial planning and the sending out of invitations began already in 1871. The Americans greatly encouraged foreign participation and were eager to make a good impression. Newly invited nations such as Japan were similarly motivated to debut and leave a lasting positive mark. While the Japanese participated in the Paris fair of 1867 and the Vienna exposition of 1873, these events did not leave lasting impressions on visitors due to their small displays and hurriedly-made arrangements. Therefore, the Japanese viewed the Centennial Exhibition as the greatest opportunity for a breakthrough in the US.

Japanese carpenters erected two main structures that represented the country. The Japanese Bazaar (**Fig. 1.**) accompanied by a tea house and another large, two-storey building, the Japanese Dwelling (**Fig. 2.**), attracted a lot of attention and stood out sharply among the displays of the over thirty participating nations. These buildings represented the traditional architectural style of the Japanese with their slightly elevated wooden structures, thatched roofs and sliding doors (*fusuma*), which enabled the free re-organization of space and were key components of Japanese interior design.[20] Besides the size and cost dedicated to these

[17] Hosley, *Japan Idea*, 29. The Japan craze is often referred to as Japanism, Japonisme, Japanese art movement, or the cult of Japan.
[18] Cho, *Selling of Japan*, 75.
[19] Ibid, 84-85.
[20] Ibid, 97.

structures, the main attraction of the national pavilion lied in its unprecedented novelty. The displayed Japanese art-ware was new to the American eyes, the craftsmanship of the erected building suggested a unique neatness and precise detail unfamiliar to Western audiences. Since visitors had limited knowledge of Japan, the impact of these new cultural traits were pleasing.

The Americans were delighted in the positive impact Japanese arts received. Due to their novelty the Japanese section surpassed many European displays. The Americans felt a sense of attachment towards the Japanese, who, similarly to the Americans, were not part of the Old World of European tradition and antiquity. Japan was a new country in the eyes of the West, thus this Oriental state could be compared to the recently founded nation of the United States more than to Europe. Japan's overwhelming success in terms of popular reception was evaluated as Japanese crafts having a "grace and elegance of design and fabulous perfection of workmanship which rival or excel the marvels of Italian or ornamental art at its zenith." Again, by comparing Japanese porcelains, bronzes, silks, embroideries and lacquer works (**Figs. 3-9.**), critics suggested that these can "outshine the most cultivated nations of Europe in arts […] which are regarded as among the proudest tokens of [their] high civilization."[21] The preference towards the displayed pieces was partly due to their decorativeness, which can be best observed in the detailed craftsmanship of vases showcasing distinctive Japanese imagery of nature, such as flowers and cranes. At the same time, the featured bamboo furniture, silk screens and lacquer-ware emphasized quality and the simplicity of form over decoration. This was achieved by highlighting textural variety and precision in the handling of different materials unique to Japan.

During the Centennial Exhibition Japan focused its efforts mainly on the aesthetic aspects of its arts and craftwork, compared to which other countries' displays were labelled as "commonplace, almost vulgar". Despite the high number of visitors in the Japanese national pavilion, the audiences were not entirely satisfied with the Japanese representation. That is, people wanted to know more. "The world wished to know more of Japan", therefore if the "commissioners had done more towards making [us] understand their country and the life of the people", Japan would have definitely had even bigger success.[22] Based on the American reaction, visitors were not simply interested in art, but were rather intrigued by the values of the Japanese, such as the patience, precision, sensitivity of the craftsmen, and the politeness and discipline behind the Japanese character. Moreover, the Japanese wore Western dresses as

[21] Harris, "All the World a Melting Pot", 30.
[22] Ibid, 31, 33.

a sign of their ambitious Westernizing attempts, which resulted in some disappointment: it was "a great pity not to see them in their outlandish gear, for picturesqueness' sake."[23] By adopting western clothing, Japanese officials aimed to equalize their positions to that of the West on the world stage, as opposed to the common practice that the inhabitants of the represented colonies paraded in traditional costumes and acted like exotic dolls.

The Centennial Exposition had a positive impact on the reception of Japanese arts and culture in the United States. Japanese art was viewed as exotic but it suited American taste. The newly formed Japanese craze resulted in a trend: an artistic inspiration that influenced styles and a consumer-focused obsession to obtain such styled products. During the exposition many Americans could witness first-hand the unique, oriental, non-western feel of Japanese arts that inspired many American initiatives in the fields of fine art, design and architecture, and initiated trade relations. Both the products of Japanese attributes, created by Westerners in response to the Japanese aesthetic, and the authentic, Japanese-made native products sold by newly-established agencies in major American cities flooded the market.

However, one anxiety remained, which was felt by both Japanese officials and American Japan-enthusiasts: the increasing Western patronage might destroy the distinct character of Japanese products. The interaction between Japan and the West resulted in a mingling of artistic traits; Japanese arts were often catered to Western tastes that resulted in a loss of authenticity. This authentic Japanese essence was, on one hand, a highly esteemed trait of original manufacturing and art, while at the same time it was also viewed as something of a lower value of 'other', which could not join the same high level of progress of Western cultures. During the 1870s Japan was still a Westernizing country and Americanization was a sign of progress an Oriental nation should follow. However, the Japanese soon recognized that Japanese objects were among the country's most saleable exports. The immense acknowledgment during world fairs enhanced the appreciation towards original, hand-crafted products made by traditional artists. The commercialization of these artworks had the potential to establish a booming market that is beneficial for the export industries, could provide job opportunities, and could elevate the Western image of Japan that is essential for treaty revisions.[24] The Japanese recognized the capitalizing opportunity, and created the profitable brand of Japanese arts, which, to a certain extent, still exists today.[25]

[23] Cho, *Selling of Japan*, 101.
[24] Ibid, 87.
[25] A parallel can be drawn to the governmental sponsorship of the Japan Brand (*Nihon burando*), which was part of the Intellectual Property Strategic Program of 2002. It is examined at large in Chapter 3.

In 1893 the World's Columbian Exposition was held in Chicago to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) arriving in America. Compared to Philadelphia, the Chicago fair outgrew its predecessor in scale, beauty, reputation, organization, budget and visitor count. Japan participated again and gave much thought to its display themes. While during the Philadelphia exhibition it was criticized for the Westernizing trend it followed, Japan since caught up with the revival of its national heritage. Compared to its Westernizing craze demonstrated since the 1870s, the commission this time carefully selected what to exhibit to project the image Japan wanted to show. Exhibiting became a sophisticated tool to build a national identity through the display and ordering of art objects.[26] For the first time the Imperial Japanese Commission guided by the demands of the Meiji officials projected the image of a 'New Japan', a constructed image of a nation that has developed in political, social, judicial, educational and industrial aspects.[27] The exhibitions argued for parity with other Western nations, and suggested that Japan was one of those civilized states equalled to them.

For the Centennial Exposition Japanese carpenters erected a structure that was based on an existing historical building (Byōdō-in, or Phoenix Hall) near Uji, Kyōto. This new version of the Phoenix Hall (**Fig. 10.**) was designed by government architect Kuru Masamichi (1855-1914) to represent the important periods in Japanese art history and architecture through the spatial division of the building. Similarly to the previously discussed Japanese Bazaar and Dwelling of the Philadelphia fair, the architectural of the exterior showed off with its distinctive Japanese simplicity again. The inner arrangement of the Phoenix Hall was carefully divided into three sections, each focusing on different eras through interior design and the careful selection and display of objects. The north wing represented the Heian period (794-1185), best known for the flourishing of Buddhism and the imperial court culture of arts and literature. The south wing was based on the Muromachi period (1336-1573), famous for its ink paintings, tea culture and Zen sect of Buddhism. The central hall connected these two wings, and was styled in the elaborate fashion of the Edo period (1603-1868) and included an interior reminiscent of the Edo (Tōkyō) castle.

Besides the above construction that emphasized the long past and unique heritage of Japan, many other buildings across the Columbian fair housed Japanese artworks centred on, for instance, fine-, sculptural- or decorative arts. A bazaar and a teahouse (**Fig. 11.**) with

[26] Langlois, *Exhibiting Japan*, 38.
[27] Ibid, 96.

participatory activities were also included to initiate amusement and increase the purchase of merchandise.[28] Besides these, Nōh theatre, flower arrangement, calligraphy and musical performances were also on show.[29] Moreover, learning from the shortcomings of the Philadelphia display, the Japanese introduced educational elements that elaborated on aspects of Japanese life. Every-day objects ranging from groceries, photographs of infrastructure and industrial achievements, educational materials, and hygiene products were added to evoke interest towards a non-Western nation. Americans admired the presented image of Japan and idealized the country's attempts at modernization and heritage preservation.

Besides the tangible objects that pleased the eye and the educative information that circulated through English-language brochures, visitors drew further impressions about the Japanese character by observing and interacting with Japanese vendors. These vendors were carefully selected to represent Japan and had multiple functions. Their primary role was to sell merchandise at the bazaar to audiences that appreciated handcrafted and labour-intensive products. In addition they behaved according to how the Japanese character ought to be perceived by Americans.[30] Politeness was the major trait associated with the Japanese: "the Japans are the politest nation on the earth"; while they were also labelled naïve and child-like: "the Japanese are a child-like people easily pleased, […] easily grieved."[31] Nevertheless, these traits were not condemned or judged, they enhanced the appeal of the Japanese. The effort they put into the exhibition was praised; the arrangement and detail of the presentation, the quality and selection of objects, the informative materials further added to understanding what Japan as a country was like and what sort of people the Japanese were.

Further critiques concluded that Japan was "one of the West", in terms of values displayed throughout the exhibition; Japan was "not about to lose its individuality, but it had nonetheless joined the march of Western civilization."[32] Consequently, the Japanese had the image of naïve, mannered and artistic people of the Orient, while at the same time acquired a status of a nation equal to the West on various levels. All in all, there can be an increasing favour of popularity observed towards the Japanese since their first appearance in the American popular scene. The Philadelphia Exhibition gave the opportunity for the Japanese to debut: they were still labelled as exotic, but their art and aesthetic tradition appealed to the taste of Victorian Americans. The Chicago Exhibition introduced in depth the appeal of the Japanese

[28] Cho, *Selling of Japan*, 107.
[29] Ibid, 110-111.
[30] Langlois, *Exhibiting Japan*, 43-44.
[31] Harris, "All the World a Melting Pot", 42.
[32] Ibid, 45.

in terms of art, culture, history and national character. Japan was labelled as an alternative culture of ancient, oriental tradition and Westernizing modernity that fused and gave an alluring appeal to a unique, nouveau nation that is not comparable to the Old World of Occident, nor the Orient. Japan was a country that incorporated the value of its heritage with the modernity of the West, while remaining authentic.

A year after the Chicago fair a politically significant event took place: Japan defeated the Chinese at the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). This victory had implications towards the reputation of Japan in Western perceptions. The United States equalled Japan to the Euro-American powers and claimed Japan superior to China, which had to do with various factors. For instance, negative American views towards China were largely due to the threat of the number of Chinese immigrants who moved to the US since the 1830s. From the 1870s onwards, strong anti-Chinese sentiments prevailed in metropolitan areas of America, especially in the West coast, which were a result of employment struggles. Feelings of antipathy influenced American perceptions of the Chinese in the world fairs too. "Ugly" Chinese exhibits were often compared to the Japanese, and were marked as "not equal to those in the Japanese collection".[33] Consequently, the Japanese victory made the West re-assess their perceptions: Japan was viewed as the most superior country in Asia. Moreover, the victorious war and the remarkable performance of the Japanese at the American fairs made the United States and the European powers revise the unequal treaties of 1854.[34]

After the treaty revisions Japan continued to participate at foreign fairs to strengthen the image of New Japan. Followed by the successes of the Philadelphia and Chicago fairs, in 1904 the United States hosted one of its final grand scale exhibitions, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis. Compared to the previous two, the St. Louis fair was grander in size, budget, audience and the number of participating countries. Japan participated again with the usual preciseness and preparedness that resulted in huge anticipation and great success. Besides the displays of industrial and artistic objects of Japanese origin scattered across the exhibition palaces, the Japanese added other structures. There was a group of commercial buildings called the Japanese Village (**Fig. 12.**), consisting of a bazaar, teahouse (**Fig. 13.**) and a theatre, the Imperial Japanese Garden (**Fig. 14.**) also attracted many visitors, and the replica of the Golden Pavilion (Kinkaku-ji) originally erected in 1397 in Kyōto was perhaps the most popular sight.

[33] Cho, *Selling of Japan*, 113.
[34] Ibid, 120.

The reception of the Japanese pavilions were extremely favourable, the critique based on the Japanese displays of art and culture remained positive. The American media favoured another addition within the official pavilion, the display of a Red Cross, which symbolized recent military accomplishments. Japan was at war again during the St. Louis exposition: the Red Cross referred to the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) fought over Manchuria against the Russian Empire, which eventually resulted in victory. Interestingly, the cross can be considered as part of the exhibit with further symbolism: while it refers to the recent military developments, it also suggests that Japan is capable of fighting a Western country and be victorious. The reference to the military success can demonstrate that Japan has managed to adjust to modern industrial conditions in a couple of decades, which matches, as well as rivals Western levels.

The Americans were in loud admiration over the quality of the Japanese exhibits, which demonstrated that Japan had great past and was capable of achieving modernity equal to the West in a mere fifty years (c.1854-1904) through hard work and effort. As a critic concluded, "none made so good a showing and won such universal praise as Japan", and Japanese exhibits were "of especial interest from the fact that […] their civilization was on a par with our own, though it had developed on different lines and entirely independent of us."[35] This time the American audiences recognized that Japan could not only be victorious over the Chinese, who in American eyes belonged to the more inferior Orient, but could win against a thought-to-be more powerful nation, Russia, which belonged to the West.

During the Russo-Japanese War, the European perceptions of Japan have already shifted and the European West became increasingly concerned with the Yellow Peril.[36] American opinions still followed a strong pro-Japanese sentiment since US politics wished that countries like Russia, Germany or France would not become too powerful in Asia. These conflicting spheres of interests resulted in an optimistic view over militant Japan in America. However, while there was enormous amount of approval of the Japanese presence, there soon came concern over Japanese military distinctiveness, which eventually lead to anxiety on behalf of the Americans.

[35] Ibid, 119.
[36] Yellow Peril became a widely used colour-metaphor applied against East-Asians, including the Japanese, especially during the era of Asian expansionism and WWII, when the Western world felt threatened by the East.

Early Japanese Collections in America: The Case of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts

As an aftermath of the American Civil War (1861-1865), the United States experienced various technological and demographic changes that resulted in new urban landscapes, including the upheaval of cities like New York, Chicago and Boston. Its city life of intense industrial and social transformations negatively impacted many Bostonians, who sought for an alternate interest to escape from their alienated every-day states.[37] The collecting of East Asian art became the new interest of New Englanders, who first encountered Japan at world fairs. They belonged to a circle of East-Asia enthusiasts, whose later impact determined the perception of both American and Japanese views towards Oriental heritage. In the late 19th century cultural institutions were more interdependent, and the academia, art market, international expositions and the emerging field of museums collaborated closely to determine and promote the significance of East Asian arts and culture.[38] As an aftermath of the Philadelphia fair, many Bostonians left in pursuit for the exotic and timeless Japan as they felt intrigued by the Japanese craze.[39] Their immense enthusiasm resulted in many existing collections of Asian antiquities, which are part of today's museums, for instance the collections of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (from here MFA or BMFA). The years between 1893 and 1919 can be labelled as the golden age of East Asian art collecting in America: while the Japan craze was inspired by fairs, the close cooperation between the museum and academia nourished it with the help of the booming art market. [40]

The cross-cultural interactions grew between Americans and Japanese since the Meiji officials hired Western experts in their recently founded institutions. Edward Sylvester Morse (1838-1925), marine zoologist, was one of the first Americans employed as professor at Tōkyō Imperial University in 1877. He invited fellow Bostonian Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) to teach political science, who became one of the first Japan experts from the United States.[41] [42] Morse's and Fenollosa's deepening interest towards Japanese culture resulted in their

[37] Cho, *Selling of Japan*, 150.
[38] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 12.
[39] Cho, *Selling of Japan*, 150-151.
[40] Cohen, *East Asian Art*, 35. Warren I. Cohen suggests the date of 1893 as the beginning, and 1919 as the end of the golden age of East Asian art collecting. 1893 marks the World's Columbian Exposition, and 1919 the death of Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919), founder of the Freer Gallery of Art. Inspired by the Chicago fair, many collectors acquired their art objects from Japan in the last decades of the 19th century. By the 20th century, collecting shifted to mainly Chinese arts, and Freer was one of the most influential collectors of this trend.
[41] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 31-32.
[42] Whitehill, *A Centennial History*, 86, 103.

obsession with collecting: Morse was fascinated with ceramics and his impressive collection was loaned to (1890), then purchased by the BMFA in 1892.[43] Morse's collection of ceramics and his study on Japanese customs became one of the most influential sources for New Englanders, and led the way in Oriental art connoisseurship at Boston as its centre.

Fenollosa was active in establishing the Japanese museum-field and promoted Japanese traditional arts in both Japan and the West. He organized the Art Department of the Imperial Museum in Tōkyō and became manager of the Fine Arts Academy sponsored by the Meiji government.[44] Fenollosa was aware of the gradual destruction of Japanese national treasures, which value were not recognised until the 1870s when the Japanese first enacted laws to their protection.[45] Fenollosa recognized the value of traditional Japanese arts and condemned the influx of Western styles. While many Westerners believed in the superiority of Japanese art to the Chinese, Fenollosa argued that the Japanese must learn again from the Chinese in tracing back to their traditions: "the best native exponents of Japanese civilization and art at every age have looked up to Chinese examples and models as the classic source of their inspiration."[46]

Fenollosa was alarmed that the Japanese abandoned their artefacts to foreign collectors: he wanted the Japanese to maintain and preserve their own heritage, while he also felt that the world must recognise Japanese arts and see them in the context of the museum abroad.[47] Before his return to Boston, he was requested by Emperor Meiji (1852-1912) to "teach the significance of Japanese art to the West as he [Fenollosa] has already taught it to the Japanese."[48] Fenollosa became the first curator of the Japanese Art Department within the BMFA (1890) and dedicatedly worked to promote Japanese art in public consciousness.[49] In the late 19th century, the MFA became hub of East Asian art scholarship with its lectures and exhibitions that attracted potential patrons of art, including Isabella S. Gardner (1840-1924) and William S. Bigelow (1850-1926). The work of museum specialists and patrons involved art dealers like Bunkio Matsuki (1867-1940) and Yamanaka & Co (Yamanaka Sadajirō, 1866-1936), who functioned as mediators between cultures. Their insider eye made first-hand Japanese expertise

[43] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 40-41.
[44] Ibid, 73.
[45] Shimizu, "Japan in American Museums", 130-131. The first cultural protection law came into being in 1871. Through the decades, mostly in response to foreign influences, it underwent various transformations that became more strict and specified. Classifications of National Treasures (*Kokuhō*), Important Cultural Properties (*Jūyō bunkazai*) and Important Art Objects (*Jūyō bijutsuhin*) further restricted their lending availability to foreign museums.
[46] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 80.
[47] Ibid, 84-85.
[48] Chisolm, *Fenollosa*, 86.
[49] Whitehill, *A Centennial History*, 96.

valued: dealers made objects available for American connoisseurs and museum professionals and explained their historical value, which was of key importance.[50]

Increased interactions with Japanese art professionals provided the base for the study of East Asian arts in the West. Undoubtedly, Westerners could acquire significant expertise in the field of Asian arts, however, Asian-born specialists were preferred, as they were considered to be better judges of their own cultures. In 1904, Japanese art critic Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913) became the consultant for the Department of Japanese and Chinese Art, then accepted curatorial position (1910). He used his expertise to purchase authentic art, curate the collection, organize exhibitions, thus the MFA was eager to use his knowledge in securing the museum's place as a pioneering institution in the study of East Asian art. While the Japanese art collecting stagnated due to the increasing price and implemented safeguarding policies of national treasures, Okakura encouraged a shift towards Chinese art.[51] Early 20th century interests in China came from the political instability of the collapse of the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), which attracted many art experts keen on obtaining valuable Chinese treasures especially from the 1920s onwards.[52]

The work of Fenollosa and Okakura resulted in a shift in the approach towards Japanese art. While the appreciation of the popular consumption of Japanese decorative arts remained a major attraction for the masses, the influence of the MFA initiated appreciation towards the higher forms of Japanese art in terms of art historical significance. Fenollosa and Okakura's specialization of knowledge used an art historical approach for Japanese and East Asian art, which as a result became an internationally recognised branch of world art.[53] Okakura contributed to shifting the status of East Asian art from decorative arts or curios, to fine arts. Moreover, he sought the creation of Japanese national identity through art: "Art with us, as elsewhere, is the expression of the highest and noblest of our national culture."[54] Similarly to Fenollosa, Okakura believed that Japanese arts must remain authentic and refute Western influences. According to him, Asia could only seek "new vitality" by returning to its historical past: "victory from within, or a mighty death without."[55] As opposed to Fenollosa's view to the return to the Chinese roots, Okakura promoted nationalistic discourses to awaken Japanese

[50] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 49-51.
[51] Ibid, 110-113.
[52] Murai, *Authoring the East*, 152, 156.
[53] Ibid, 23.
[54] Ibid, 30.
[55] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 119, 124. Chen references Okakura's *The Ideals of the East* (1903).

consciousness, based on which Japan should be Asia's leader and protector from the West, who could combat Western supremacy through the enforcement of a pan-Asiatic alliance. To revive Asia, Japan needs to retain its national identity, because Japan represents the best of what Asia can offer.[56]

Okakura firmly believed that developing the collection of Asian arts is indispensable part of the MFA's identity, furthermore the Japanese collection has a "preeminent place among the Oriental collections of the world. […] In quality it can be only inferior to the Imperial Museums of Nara and Kyōto while for the school of Tokugawa painting it is unrivalled anywhere… the collection as its stands is a unique one in the West."[57] Okakura claimed that the MFA collection provided a strong base that shall be expanded to be the "representative collection of Oriental art in the West", and that is to be carried out by collecting quality fine art objects of all art historical styles.[58] Nevertheless, under Okakura's guidance, the MFA was the first institution to create a first-rate collection of East Asian art that no other museums could match. While European museums had unparalleled collections of European art, the Americans had much greater understanding of fine arts of East Asia. The MFA fashioned itself as the meeting point of East and West: a universal survey museum where all cultures are equally present.[59]

Founded in 1870, the MFA opened its doors in 1876 and introduced a new building to house its collections in 1909. This addition dedicated a series of galleries to Asia, which attracted many visitors, who claimed that "the most astonishing and memorable feature […] is the Japanese and Chinese collection. […] The other galleries of Christendom show us the ideals of Egypt and Greece and western Europe, but in this museum alone do we get to the full feeling for the great relations at which our Oriental brothers have arrived."[60] Through the immense popularity of these galleries, the museum promoted itself as an inclusive institution that recognises Asian art as high art, which simultaneously symbolizes the American values of inclusion and openness towards the heritages of different peoples. In an innovative way, the

[56] Ibid, 127-128. Okakura's pan-Asiatic declarations of Japanese superiority are used for militaristic justification of Japanese invasions to neighbouring countries in connection to WWII. His slogan of "Asia is one" is used during WWII military affairs when promoting the imperialist concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a territory of fellow Asian countries under the guidance of Japan.
[57] Whitehall, *A Centennial History*, 131.
[58] Murai, *Authoring the East*, 147-148.
[59] Ibid, 161-162, 165.
[60] Ibid, 133-134.

MFA prioritized the leisurely, aesthetic museum experience aimed at the general public over the Victorian ideal that focused on the training of artists.[61]

The Asian collections housed in the new building on Huntington Avenue followed a display scheme oriented towards visitor experience. The improved display arrangement along horizontal and vertical axes aimed to enhance the understanding of audiences, who followed the chronological sequence of objects, which was oftentimes also organized based on media. Museum handbooks were provided, which included a floorplan indicating the correct flow of visitors. Moreover, Japanese environment was installed in the Buddhist Room and the Japanese Court to showcase Japanese interior design and aesthetic principles. Japanese atmosphere was evoked by the *shōji* screens (sliding panel of translucent paper in wooden frame), simple plastered and wooden walls and a *tokonoma* space (alcove-like space for display of artistic objects), which all intensified the presence of the displayed art objects. Showing authentic-looking Japanese interior was a key exhibiting strategy of education about the context how Japanese arts were originally shown. The intimate Japanese atmosphere of these not historically correct but decoratively sufficient period rooms was preferred over the neo-classical ambiance of other galleries. It signalled a shift to another dimension, an entry to the exotic East, as clearly exemplified by the Buddhist Room. The Japanese Court had similar effects, however, it was not strictly an exhibiting space, but designed to be a resting area to alleviate museum fatigue.[62] Through the newly implemented exhibiting strategies that combined aesthetic experience with education, the MFA succeeded in creating a display that fascinated visitors with Asian art.

In addition to the success of the exhibition place that elevated the status of the MFA's permanent collection of Asian arts, a series of exhibitions, public lectures and intriguing media sources continued to cater to the interests of Bostonians. However, the fascination towards Asian art soon outgrew the MFA, and by the end of the 1920s Japanese and Chinese arts could be found in many institutions. While the Boston-based collection remained one of the most influential, museums in Chicago, Cleveland, Kansas City, St. Louis, New York and Washington obtained collections of a similar standard.[63] In the upcoming decades Asian art was constantly re-valuated as the political circumstances shaped international relations. The emerging globalization and transcultural interchanges between the United States and Japan had underlying impacts on the values towards national culture and the viewing of the 'Other'.[64]

[61] Ibid, 135, 145-146.
[62] Ibid, 174, 178, 184.
[63] Cohen, *East Asian Art*, 72.
[64] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 94-95.

Between the 1880s and 1910s, Japanese art became a useful tool in the diplomatic agenda to self-fashion the image of Japan. The new Meiji government mastered the art of national self-representation that they conceived to be essential in international politics, and utilized their culture to obtain recognition in the Western world. Japanese arts gained fine art status first at the Chicago fair, then were displayed at the BMFA as part of the collection obtained by Americans, both suggesting that Japan reached the label of a civilized nation acknowledged by the West. While the former was thanks to Meiji efforts and the latter was due to the interest of American Japan-enthusiasts, both instances were in favour of the advancement of Japanese arts and culture in the United States, which simultaneously was of consequence towards and reflected the international relations between the two countries. Art played a role in shaping the course of international politics during this period. However, as analysed in Chapter 2, from the 1920s onwards the value of Japanese art became subjugated to the flow of political changes culminating in World War II (1939-1945), and deriving from the war's aftermath in the following decades.

Chapter 2:

Images of Japan in Post-war America and the Role of the Museum

When Charles L. Freer's death (1919) ended the golden age of East Asian art collecting in the United States, a less significant phase followed in which curators, dealers and art historians shaped the major activities related to Asian art. The 1920s witnessed the interest turning towards China, which became the major focus by the 1930s in terms of art collecting and looting. The Great Depression (1929-1933) provided the opportunity for those late-coming American museums that did not expand their collections in the field of Asian art. Richard Fuller (1897-1976), founder of the Seattle Art Museum reflected: "the depression was a favourable time to purchase from important dealers their 'white elephants', many of which are now Museum treasures." The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, under the directorship of sinologist Laurence Sickman (1907–1988), simultaneously obtained masterpieces from the Chinese, who began to see their art as a diplomatic tool in the midst of political turmoil of the recently established Republic of China (1912-1949).[65] The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York also obtained its fair share of Asian objects in this period, including a frieze from the Longmen archaeological site that was carved out by bandits under the request of Alan Priest (1898-1969), who was the curator of Far Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York from 1928. Similar lootings were commonplace during this era in which the Chinese government lacked power to protect its national treasures, and as long as art dealers found potential buyers in a flourishing market, including today prominent museums.[66] Most expeditions to the politically unstable and economically impoverished China were considered "rescue missions" to save artistic products, which justified illicit procedures by the "cultural caretakers", who believed they had the ethical obligation to loot in order to safeguard.[67]

There was a shift both in place and specificity of interest that marked the 1920s and 1930s: the East Coast-, especially New England-oriented Asian art expertise expanded as more American museums saw the potential in acquiring East Asian objects.[68] Furthermore, the

[65] Cohen, *East Asian Art,* 103-104.
[66] Ibid, 116-117, 120.
[67] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline,* 163-164.
[68] Ibid, 161.

infatuation with Chinese objects outweighed the Japan craze of the previous decades due to the easily and cheaply collectable arts in China. Nevertheless, Japanese art was still exhibited with great success: a joint exhibition sponsored by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and Harvard University under the title *Art Treasures from Japan* was organized in 1936 to celebrate Harvard's tercentenary founding. As part of cultural diplomacy to deter the public opinion over Japan's recent military conflicts, national treasures, including objects from Emperor Hirohito's (1901-1989) own Imperial Household, were loaned and attracted great attention.[69] Other loans included objects from distinguished Japanese private collections, the Imperial Museum, the Imperial Art School of Tōkyō, and the Imperial University of Kyōto. The exhibit was labelled the "most distinguished exhibition of Japanese art ever held outside the Orient" [70], however, for Bostonians it also hold the opportunity to showcase their prided collection, which was founded by their local experts a generation or two earlier, as discussed in Chapter 1.

On December 7, 1941, Japan entered World War II by bombing Pearl Harbor, which officially began the Pacific War that ended in 1945. This had various impacts on the public attitude towards Japanese art and culture. During the war, museums housing Japanese collections moved their objects to storage in fear of vandal attacks of American patriots.[71] Japanese arts were only showcased during post-war when anti-Japanese attitudes have cooled down and the American masses became receptive again towards Japanese culture. This chapter's main focus is the time period between WWII (1939-1945) and the end of Japan's economic miracle at the start of the 1990s. First I explore what shaping factors contributed towards the Japanese image that Americans perceived in the Cold War (1947-1991). Consequently, I shall elaborate on what complementary and derogatory stereotypes shaped American consciousness based on the various political and economic events that took place in Japanese-American post-war history. After understanding the contexts of the different Japanese images that formulated American thought, I further explore the attitude towards Japanese arts and culture by looking at the role of the museum in shaping public perceptions. Importantly, the increasingly critical and questioning nature of postmodern museum practices that culminated in the new museology of the late 1980s emphasized the socio-political power of museums. This chapter introduces exhibitions as important cultural platforms where audiences witnessed the blurring between high- and mass culture that gradually eliminated

[69] Cohen, *East Asian Art,* 122. Japan's imperial expansion included military influence in countries like Korea and China in the 1930s, which was followed by further invasion into South-East Asia in 1942.
[70] Whitehill, *A Centennial History,* 478-480.
[71] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 284.

distinction between art and everyday life. Importantly, the enhanced focus on the audience shaped the exhibition-culture of Japanese arts and introduced innovative ways through which the American public recognised Japan.

From Enemy to Ally, from Partner to Rival: The Cyclicality of the Japanese Image in Post-war American Thought

World War II established a standard set of images attributed to the Japanese.[72] The intense anti-Japanese sentiments resorted to nonhuman or subhuman representations, which were depicted in newspapers and magazines to increase American propaganda during the war. While the Nazis were detested, they "were still people" in the American eye, however, the press deliberately dehumanized the Japanese by establishing a divide between the American "us" and the Japanese "them" based on the Oriental-Occidental rhetoric of the 'Other'.[73] Furthermore, "the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice." Aside from comparing the Japanese to various insects (**Fig. 15.**)[74] and rodents, "mad dogs", sheep possessing a "herd mentality", and octopus grasping towards Asia, they were most often featured as "beastly little monkeys" (**Figs. 16-17.**)[75], or "Japes", a combined word of Japs and apes.[76] However, to the "monstrous and inhuman"[77] enemy the "myth of the Japanese superman" was added, which reflected not the

[72] Glazer, "From Ruth Benedict to Herman Kahn", 162. Nathan Glazer, sociologist, distinguishes between "image", "attitude" and "opinion", referring to "attitude" as a more general way of thinking or feeling about something compared to "opinion". Based on concepts in social psychology, he suggests that "image" is something more basic, solid and long-lasting then the other two. Glazer also likens "image" to "prejudice", however, while the latter is pejorative, the former does not necessarily suggest negative attributes.
[73] Dower, *War without Mercy*, 78, 82.
[74] Figure 15 (*Leatherneck* magazine, 1945) illustrates the Japanese as vermin, a species called "Louseous Japanicas". The caricature shows the Japanese as repulsive, distorted lice, who need to be exterminated: the American army began the bombing of Japanese cities in March 1945, the same time as this cartoon was created to reflect on war events.
[75] Figures 16 and 17 show two opposing images of the Japanese likened to apes. The *Punch* magazine illustration (1942) takes inspiration from Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* (1894) to illustrate Japanese soldiers as monkeys advancing rapidly in South-East Asian jungles during their military expansion of 1942. As opposed to these wild beastly creatures, the *Leatherneck* cover (1945) likens the Japanese to cute, domesticated pets as the little chimpanzee sitting grumpily on the shoulder of the laughing American marine shows. These two depictions demonstrate changing attitudes towards the Japanese during and after WWII: the Japanese image in the American eye transformed from beasts to pets as the Japanese-American international relations changed.
[76] Dower, *War without Mercy*, 82-86.
[77] Ibid, 112.

American racism towards lesser men, but the unforeseen shock and astonishment towards a mysterious and invincible foe, who the Americans gravely underestimated.[78] The superman imagery was brought forward by Western images of the 'Other', which also inspired comparing the Japanese to children. However, without the connotation of naiveté and innocence, but with an emphasis towards immaturity, primitivism, violence and emotional instability.[79] As the war came to an end, war memories and war imagery gradually faded but never completely disappeared from the American mind. As demonstrated in this section, the war-time stereotypes of the Japanese were awakened and re-used repeatedly when political circumstances evoked tension between Japan and America.[80]

The decades following WWII left their mark on American attitudes towards Japan. These attitudes were all interdependent on the geopolitical and economic situations that impacted those years: aggression and fear during WWII, sympathy and compassion during the Occupation (1945-1952), increasing curiosity and admiration in the late 1950s and 1960s, and the return of worry, concern and fear interwoven with a continued feel of awe during the Japanese economic boom of the 1970s and 1980s.[81] These separate phases of post-war relations had their own prevailing images towards Japan, starting with the years of "inevitable harmony" from the Occupation to the early 1960s, when both Japan and America shared common interests.[82] During this period the relations between Japan and the US were interlinked and seemed inseparable: America shaped the political and economic spheres of post-war Japan, while Japan depended on the economic and security assistance of the US. The motivation behind the American occupation was to "insure that Japan will not become a menace to the United States or to the peace and security of the world."[83] In order to achieve this, the Americans rehabilitated Japanese economy and enforced democratization. Consequently, Japan became one of the fastest growing economies in the world and re-emerged as the "foremost industrial power in Asia".[84]

During the Occupation the American infatuation with Japanese culture re-emerged, "Japan's image was transformed into a romantic combination of flowers, kimono-clad beauties, Zen Buddhism, and a graceful way of life."[85] Tourism encouraged a widespread appreciation

[78] Ibid, 99, 104-106.
[79] Ibid, 142-143.
[80] Johnson, *Japanese through American Eyes*, 36.
[81] Ibid, 3.
[82] Clapp and Halperin, "U.S. Elite Images of Japan", 210-211.
[83] Johnson, *Japanese through American Eyes*, 55.
[84] Ibid, 123.
[85] Clapp and Halperin, "U.S. Elite Images of Japan", 211.

towards Japanese culture, somewhat similar to the years experienced during the first phase of Japanophilia when the first tourists arrived to the country. Again, Japan became viewed as a "land of exquisite beauty [with] people dedicated to its cultivation." Tourists considered the every-day aspects of Japanese culture, including culinary arts, traditional clothing, books, and Japanese gardens highly appealing.[86] Tourism became a major asset of Japan by the 1960s: in 1964 Japan hosted the Olympic Games in Tōkyō, which made it the first Asian country to do so, and in 1970 the first Japan-based world's fair. In order to enhance tourism and boost the economy, Japan began to export its cultural products again, which ranged from traditional crafts, Japanese architecture and garden to other forms, such as movies or Zen Buddhism.

The image of a feminized Japan was used as part of a marketing strategy to sell Japanese products. It derived from the American attraction towards Japanese women and children during the Occupation to downplay the perceived barbarism of the Japanese soldier.[87] Femininity was closely linked to the charming, doll-like Japanese women, the beautiful Japanese landscape and the traditional arts of ceramics, painting, flower-arrangement and gardening, which were considered as foundations of the romanticized image of Japanese culture. Besides femininity, Japanese childishness was used by American media to promote an innocent, immature Japanese image. During the Occupation General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964) encouraged fraternization between the occupying troops and the Japanese civilians, which projected a patronizing attitude and fashioned Americans as teachers of democracy. The Occupation became seen as a "test of American civilization", which, figuratively, required the American parent-figure to civilize the Japanese child, and teach "how to walk, talk, think, and play all over again" based on Western standards. The result would be the Japanese child maturing into a responsible adult, which is a metaphoric depiction of a non-white nation progressing into a capitalist democracy.[88]

During the Occupation masculine themes of culture were deliberately downplayed in favour of a feminine or child-like Japan. However, these themes broadened up gradually to include more masculine aspects of culture, including martial arts, samurai movies, novels of warriors and ninjas, or *seppuku* (ritual suicide). This gradual shift is suggestive of a progression in American ability to move on from the wartime Japanese stereotype and embrace Japanese culture from every aspect. While the immediate post-war years could only focus on a feminized image of Japanese culture and society, this later transformed as Americans got over their war-

[86] Johnson, *Japanese through American Eyes*, 94-95.
[87] Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 19.
[88] Ibid, 57-59.

time trauma. Gradually, the masculine image of Japan re-emerged in America, exemplified also by the image of Japanese businessmen, who replaced the geisha and the cherry blossom imagery. [89] By the 1960s Japan began to project a double image: "one face turned to its classical past, the other preoccupied with the present and with Western ways of thinking, behaving, working."[90] This signalled a co-existence between the feminine and masculine spheres of Japanese culture, which became perceived as more and more masculine as the Japanese economy took off. In the American imagination the "cherry petal exoticism", associated with traditional arts and culture, was gradually overpowered by the image of masculine Japan, a modern, powerful nation. [91]

From the late 1950s onwards the Japanese-American relations could be best described as partnership. The 1960 amendment of the Japanese American Security Treaty introduced a period of alliance in the Japan-US relations, which promoted cooperation between America and an economically and politically equal Japan, who participated independently in world affairs. Mutual interests created a workable relationship between the two countries, and promoted the image of Japan as a "stable, economically powerful democracy [which] is destined to become the leader of Asia." [92] Gradually, Japan became Asia's number one industrial power in the 1960s. The Americans applauded this development, since it meant that they invested wisely in Japan during the Occupation, and succeeded in their role as teachers of Western civilization. With Japan becoming the "Colossus of the Orient", Americans felt a sense of superiority towards their significant contribution to Japan's success. [93] However, by the late 1960s, Japan became the free world's number two producer, which posed a threat to American supremacy. The years from the 1970s to 1990 can be characterized as an era of conflicting interests, in which Japan became a world power economically and disturbed the status quo of established world order.

The image of 'Japan, Inc.' appeared in American consciousness when low-priced, well-built Japanese products invaded the American market. Threatening implications of this image existed since Americans perceived that Japan purposefully flooded the American market and took advantage of the economic assistance of the Occupation. This image was fuelled by war-time de-humanizing attitudes: this time the Japanese were not the primitive beasts of WWII,

[89] Johnson, *Japanese through American Eyes*, 109.
[90] Ibid, 102.
[91] Morris, "Paradigm Paranoia", 53.
[92] Clapp and Halperin, "U.S. Elite Images of Japan", 213-215.
[93] Moeller, "Pictures of the Enemy", 33-34.

but the "economic animals [who] performed brilliantly."[94] Furthermore, the Japan, Inc. image implied a nation of homogenised people, the image of a collective Japanese will, who lacked any trace of individualism.[95] Japanese were seen as "supermen whose costs and precision Americans and Europeans could never compete with."[96] Such views derived from racism in the political, economic and social spheres, which linked Japan, Inc. with an un-human aspect of a phenomenal Japan that could reach technological levels rivalling the US, and become a world power in a couple of decades. Similarly to Pearl Harbor, Americans perceived to be "in the midst of another major war with Japan. This time it's not a shooting war, […] the current conflict is trade war. [And] we're well on the road to defeat."[97]

Japan's economic success, labelled as an "economic Pearl Harbor", culminated in the 1980s and reaffirmed Japan's position in the American imagination as an enemy.[98] The previous decades of "Japan-kissing" turned to "Japan-bashing" by the mid-1980s, which was a trend that first appeared in the academic field, then gained dominance in popular literature, including newspapers, magazines and novels. Japan-bashing was a result of the political climate which happened with accordance to the rising unrest towards Japan as a matter of refashioning the "yellow perilism" of the WWII period.[99] It is important to note that Japan was portrayed as the enemy of the United States during the era of a changing world order, the gradual break-up of the Soviet Union (late 1980s to 1991), which ended the Cold War. With Japan becoming the world's number one economic power, it was viewed as an Eastern country challenging the identity of the West. Contemporary American articles suggested that "if the future is technological, and if technology has become 'Japanised', then the syllogism would suggest that the future is now Japanese too."[100] Phrases like "the Cold War is over, Japan won" were commonplace in American media until the early 1990s, when the Japanese economic bubble collapsed and a decade of recession followed. This event signalled a shift in popular opinion and a new enemy was created in the American consciousness: Islamic fundamentalists and international terrorists.

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[94] Ibid, 35.
[95] Morris, "Paradigm Paranoia", 56. To note, such distinguished Japanese traits are part of the *nihonjinron*-associated descriptions of the Japanese: homogeneity, group-orientation, dedication to work and perseverance are seen as essential traits found in Japanese people.
[96] Clapp and Halperin, "U.S. Elite Images of Japan", 206.
[97] Johnson, *Japanese through American Eyes*, 122.
[98] Dower, 314. The Nixon administration (1969-1974) under the presidency of Richard Nixon presented Japan as an economic enemy in order to lighten the criticism towards the faults within the US economy that played a serious role in America's economic stagnation.
[99] Morris, "Paradigm Paranoia", 47-50.
[100] Ibid, 51-52.

Japan's economic downfall and the creation of a new enemy re-started the circle of images towards the Japanese, who were once again perceived positively. Consequently, it can be argued that "Japan is a product of our imagination, and the country that we see is only the one we have been trained to see."[101] Geopolitical and economic factors are key catalysts to construct the Japanese image, and the press and popular media are important tools in conveying it to the American public. The potential hidden in the power of exhibitions as part of the activities of cultural establishments is examined below with more detail. Based on the images proposed by these mediators of culture, the Japanese image today exists through binaries of good/bad, ally/foe, attractive/repulsive, gentle/threatening, and it depends on the political context which part of this double vision is being projected.[102] Japan's level of racial and orientalised Otherness is determined by America's current understanding of Japan. This understanding arguably still traces back to the romanticized exotic Japan of the Occupation, the treacherous villainous Japan of WWII, and the superhuman Japanese businessmen of more recent years, which all established their own set of stereotypes of the same country.

Patterns of Exhibiting Japanese Art and Culture in Cold War America

While exhibitions on Chinese art were held frequently during WWII in American museums, renewed interest towards Japanese arts developed only by the early 1950s.[103] [104] This interest was pointed at different forms of Japanese art: some of high art value exhibited in museums, and many in forms of low-, or popular art aimed at the masses. In Japan, the latter gained a newly emerging role during the Occupation (1945-1952): paintings, prints, pottery and sculpture were purchased by American soldiers as souvenirs from the impoverished Japanese as part of a craft-for-food trend. Honourable families also sold their treasures, which could be

[101] Moeller, "Pictures of the Enemy", 29.
[102] Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 294-296.
[103] Chen, *From Passion to Discipline*, 284. A series of *Art of Our Allies* exhibitions were held in BMFA in 1943, including *The Art of China*, because curators observed that the war increased interest towards China.
[104] Cohen, *East Asian Art*, 138-139. Collectors and curators shifted back to Japanese art again due the Chinese Revolution (1948-1952). Buying Japanese art was enabled by their cheap price, and was also fuelled by the political situation and scarcity of Chinese objects present on the market. During the Korean War (1950-1953), tension arised again between North Korea supporting China and South Korea supporting US, which resulted in intense measures, including the complete block of Chinese imports. Chinese art was not allowed to enter the United States, and collectors were not allowed to enter China.

categorized as works of high art. For the first time since the Japan craze of the world fairs, this period initiated a demand for craft items with Japanese characteristics, which were often modern, usable products with traditional decoration. The Americans wanted Japaneseness in these products: they longed for a Japanese character rooted in Japanese daily life, inspired by the uniqueness of pre-modern Japanese culture. The American buyers' appreciation for such products restored the self-esteem of the Japanese by securing their cultural uniqueness and opening up a market that could alleviate economic production.[105] At the same time, the demand and appreciation for both high- and low forms of Japanese arts expanded the scope of American understanding of Japanese culture. Furthermore, as exhibitions on Japanese art restarted in museums, attempts were made to add other forms of Japanese arts to the themes, which allowed popular culture to enter museums.

In the 1950s John Davison Rockefeller III (1906-1978) and his wife Blanchette Ferry Rockefeller (1909-1992) became major patrons and collectors of Asian art. Their efforts contributed greatly to the American influence on Japanese cultural activities during the post-war era, which included several exhibitions. Rockefeller based his collaboration on cultural exchange following the principles of reciprocity and democracy. His use of 'soft power' reflected the American approach towards Japan. Soft power refers to shared cultural and political values between two countries, through which cooperation and understanding are achieved. In order to gain the support of Japan's population, the United States withdrew from the use of military force or economic pressure (hard power), and focused on diplomatic means of exchange that is beneficial for both partners. The Rockefeller Foundation offered financial support for cultural exchange activities related to Japan, while the Japan Society, under the presidency of Rockefeller, aimed to promote mutual understanding between the two countries.[106]

During the San Francisco Peace Conference of 1951, an exhibition titled *Art Treasures from Japan* was held at the M. H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco to promote friendly relations between Japan and the United States. As it received a positive response, Rockefeller actively lobbied for a similar exhibition to be held across the US, as part of a collaborative project between the two countries' governments. With Rockefeller's patronage, *Japanese Painting and Sculpture from the Sixth Century A.D. to the Nineteenth Century* was made in 1953 to be hosted in sequence of five museums: the National Gallery of Art in

[105] Kida, "Japanese Crafts and Cultural Exchange", 382-384.
[106] Ibid, 380, 385. Kida uses Joseph Nye's concept of 'soft power', formulated in 1990.

Washington, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Seattle Art Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.[107] American museum specialists travelled to Japan under the lead of Sherman E. Lee (1918-2008) to negotiate objects to be loaned for this exhibition. [108] They demanded at least one piece from every major collection in Japan, including Emperor Hirohito's, and they had to be the same or above quality of the already existing collections in the United States. Quality was a key factor, and the result was the finest exhibition of Japanese art ever held outside of Japan. The exhibition included ninety-one masterpieces, amongst which twelve National Treasures, fifty-seven Important Cultural Properties and six Important Art Objects were featured.[109] The objects were one of their kinds, each representative of their own era, and displayed through a chronological sequence to emphasize the development and grandeur of Japanese art history.[110] The displayed objects can be labelled as masterpieces of the standard periodization scheme starting with the Nara (710-794) and ending with Edo periods (1603-1868), each work representing the canon of Japanese cultural heritage based on their respective eras.[111]

This exhibition attracted over 187,000 visitors at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. during its thirty-two days of display. The number of visitors was the lowest in Boston with 20,000 people. The biggest success was in Seattle with the count of 73,000, which meant that one in every seven citizen paid a visit, which must have been due to the massive publicity through electronic and print media.[112] Catalogues were made in hope of better understanding Japan and strengthening the friendship between Japan and America. David E. Finley (1890-1977), director of the National Gallery remarked that "these works of art will contribute to a better understanding of Japan on the part of American people. Art transcends the barriers of language", which enables the American recognition that Japan can contribute "to the culture of the civilized world."[113] Overall, the exhibition was a huge diplomatic success, even President Eisenhower (1890-1969) paid a visit to show his interest and support. As Rockefeller later reflected, "what [he] hoped from this exhibition was that

[107] Ibid, 387.
[108] Shimizu, "Japan in American Museums", 128. Alan Priest (curator of Far Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art), Langdon Warner (former curator of Oriental Art at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum) and Archibald Gibson Wenley (director of the Freer Gallery of Art) arrived to Japan in July 1952 to present the list of desired objects for the *Japanese Painting and Sculpture* exhibition.
[109] Ibid, 129.
[110] Kida, "Japanese Crafts and Cultural Exchange", 387-388.
[111] Shimizu, "Japan in American Museums", 130.
[112] Cohen, *East Asian Art*, 142.
[113] Shimizu, "Japan in American Museums", 127.

through it, Americans would come to know more about the cultural and spiritual life of the Japanese, and not only was that purpose completely achieved but the exhibition had also encouraged our plans to create opportunities to bring Japanese art, formally so different from our "fine art", to America."[114]

The 1953 exhibition can be labelled the most important event of the 1950s for the promotion of Japanese art. It was a survey-type exhibition, which successfully illuminated the selected masterpieces of all periods of Japanese art history. Several similar type exhibitions followed in succession, including for instance *Art Treasures from Japan* (1965) sent by the Japanese government to tour four cities in North America. Topical-focused exhibitions were frequently featured in the up-coming decades, for instance the *Japanese Arts of the Heian Period: 794-1185* (1969) at the Asia Society Galleries, New York, *Courtly Traditions of Japanese Art and Literature* (1973) at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, or *Shinto Arts* (1976) at the Japan House Gallery, New York. Single artist or school focused exhibitions were also organized to introduce specific styles or painters, such *Nanga* (literati) painting or the works of the eccentric master, Itō Jakuchū (1716-1800).[115]

In contrast to the above listed more traditional exhibits, masterpiece-oriented shows were organized to cater to the tastes of audiences through the display of popular culture. For instance, one of the most unusual and well-received exhibitions travelled to sixteen cities within the United States over a four-year period. *Tsutsumu: The Art of the Japanese Package* (1975) was a joint project between the American Federation of Arts and the Japan House Gallery, and introduced Japan's commercial arts and crafts. These were displayed as distinct forms of artistic tradition with high quality craftsmanship that could be attributed to the high art of valued paintings and sculpture. Furthermore, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1974 exhibition of *The Great Wave* was similarly inspired by Euro-American popular tastes tracing back to the Japonisme trend of the late 19th century. Further experimentations occurred in exhibiting tradition that expanded the high art framework and introduced new themes of Japanese culture to Americans. *Kanban* (1982) focused on shop signs, and *Tōkyō: Form and Spirit* (1986) featured art and architecture in the technology- and commerce-focused cityscape of urban Tōkyō. Such innovative exhibitions followed in the larger context of changing exhibition agendas and themes of the 1970s and 1980s, which broke with the traditional exhibition trend practiced previously.[116]

[114] Kida, "Japanese Crafts and Cultural Exchange", 388.
[115] Shimizu, "Japan in American Museums", 124-125.
[116] Ibid, 125-126.

After the success of the 1953 exhibition, Rockefeller continued to promote Japanese arts and culture within the US. Several exhibitions organized at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, are linked to his name. Importantly, these exhibitions paved the way for a novel understanding of Japanese arts and culture over the previously stressed high art perspective of paintings and sculpture, and introduced new, unique art forms and cultural practices. This approach suggested that Japanese arts cannot necessarily be categorized through the Western understanding of fine arts, even though demonstrating high quality mastery. For instance, the exhibition *Japanese Pottery* was held at the MoMA between April and May 1954, and curators invited artist Kitaōji Rosanjin (1883-1959) to promote Japanese-American friendship. The *Japanese Exhibition House* was another Japan-related exhibition at the MoMA promoted by Rockefeller, which introduced a *shoin* (scholar's study) style building designed by architect Junzō Yoshimura (1908-1997). It was accompanied by a Japanese-style garden, which attracted over 223,000 visitors during its opening.[117] Furthermore, MoMA's *Abstract Japanese Calligraphy* (1954) was made in mind with the American abstract expressionist movement of the 1940-50s. It intended to draw formal parallels between the two art forms, while at the same time acknowledging the long-standing tradition of calligraphy in East Asia.

The above three exhibitions housed at the MoMA were made available as part of the Japan Society's initiative, which at that time did not have a permanent gallery. Followed by the success of the MoMA-based exhibitions, the Japan Society continued to introduce Japanese culture to American people with the *Japanese Life Culture* exhibition, which toured through the US between 1956 and 1963. It was a sequel of eight exhibitions focusing on clothing, ceramics, dolls, Japanese calligraphy and contemporary Japanese prints. Compared to the high-art focused exhibits of many museums, it consciously and innovatively drew attention to the popular culture of the masses. The focus on every-day culture attempted to enlighten audiences in terms of using Japanese products in their contemporary living, thus making the visitor connect with Japan on a more personal level. This type of exhibition attempted to familiarize the Japanese with Americans through culture with the aim to sweep away anti-Japanese sentiments that still dominated in certain circles.[118]

Aside from the efforts made by John D. Rockefeller III and the Japan Society in the promotion of Japanese arts, it is important to mention the newly emerging collections of the

[117] Kida, "Japanese Crafts and Cultural Exchange", 390-391. The *Japanese Exhibition House* and garden were open on two occasions: first between 20 June-31 October 1954, then 27 April-16 October 1955. The building was later moved to Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, where it remains today.
[118] Ibid, 392.

early Cold War period. During the occupation years, the Seattle and Cleveland museums acquired Japanese art objects due to the dreadful economic conditions in Japan. Sherman Lee, former curator of Oriental Art at the Detroit Institute of Arts, obtained various masterpieces for Richard Fuller, his friend at the Seattle Art Museum, where Lee gained curatorial position after the war. Between 1948 and 1952 Lee got hold of precious Japanese objects that elevated the Seattle museum's Japanese collection to similar heights as the Boston Museum of Fine Art's prestigious collection. Because of Lee's efforts, Seattle today has one of the greatest collections of Japanese arts worldwide, and arguably the best all-around collection outside of Japan.[119] In 1958 Lee became the director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, which became another major museum specializing in East Asian art.

Besides the Seattle and Cleveland museums, another important museum gained recognition in the field of Asian arts in the United States. Labelled as the "gateway to the Orient", San Francisco had large immigrant population consisting of both Japanese and Chinese citizens, which often gave rise to anti-Asian sentiments. Consequently, the city felt the need to have their minorities represented, in order to enhance understanding and friendship between American and migrant people. Avery Brundage (1887-1975), Chicago-based multimillionaire established an important collection of Asian art, focusing at large on quantity over quality. Similarly to Charles Freer, he saw potential in Chinese art collecting, however, while Freer became one of the greatest connoisseurs of Chinese art because of his undoubted love and interest, Brundage preferred being called a collector and made dealers chose the objects for him. He lacked the eye for Asian art, therefore collected in large amounts, and stayed away from painted mediums, which had the highest potential of controversies in terms of authenticity and attribution. The Society of Asian Art was specifically formed in 1958 to gain Brundage's collection for the city of San Francisco, which resulted in the establishment of a new museum. The Asian Art Museum opened its doors in 1966, showcasing the last assembled comprehensive collection in the field of Asian art in America. The Brundage collection made the city of San Francisco to gain fame as one of the greatest centres of the study of East Asian art in America.[120]

During the Cold War museums were important institutions that familiarized American public with Japanese arts and culture. Various exhibitions across the country introduced ancient objects of the Japanese artistic tradition, while simultaneously acquainted the masses with more

[119] Cohen, *East Asian Art*, 134-135.
[120] Ibid, 146-150.

practical, every-day aspects of Japanese culture. The former type of exhibitions associated Japanese high art with a traditional Japanese image of an oriental, exotic Other, while the latter type exhibitions focused on a more modern and ordinary side of Japan. At the same time, the inclusion of low art forms of Japanese culture into museums meant an expanding interest towards familiarization with a foreign country, which reflected the prevailing geopolitical and economic developments of the post-war era. During the Cold War, Asia, and particularly Japan, became large parts of America's world, which consequently meant that museums exhibited more and better Asian art. A certain degree of Asianization infiltrated the everyday life of Americans, which included cuisine, shopping, and electronics amongst others. Besides the large number of Asian, especially Japanese import products during the 1980s, American knowledge about Asia deepened due to increased tourism, immigration, and political-economic factors, which all resulted in the demand for more Asia-themed exhibitions. As a continuing fascination towards things Japanese, Chapter 3 shall explore how the Japanese image changed in the 1990s as a result of Japan's burst of bubble economy. Importantly, this phase of recession enabled the emergence of the fascinating mass culture-oriented 'Cool Japan' imagery, which overtook popular consciousness in the West and infiltrated museums with unique Japanese contemporary art.

Chapter 3:

Cool Japan and Superflat:
Japanese Art and Culture in America between 1991 and 2011

A general disillusionment emerged in Japan in the 1990s, which had various triggering factors and profound implications that changed Japanese society at its core. The year 1991 signalled the end of Cold War (1947-1991) with the disintegration of the Eastern bloc under the dominance of the Soviet Union. At this time in Japan, a recession ended the period of the country's successful bubble economy (1986-1991), which resulted in widening wage gaps, unemployment, homelessness, and increasing suicide rates. Political scandals increased the distrust towards the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which undermined its three and half decade hegemonic rule and further destabilized domestic politics. On top of that, the year of 1995 similarly deteriorated the Japanese self-image of living in a peaceful and safe society: in January 1995 the Kobe earthquake claimed over 5,000 lives and impacted maritime transportation gravely in Western Japan. In March 1995 a lethal sarin gas attack and the shooting of a top official of the National Police Agency, both attributed to the doomsday cult of Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth), shook Japanese society. [121] These events highlighted the government's failure in crisis management, and characterized the major disastrous happenings of Japan's Lost Decade between 1991 and 2001.

Scholars argue that Japan's peak of the economic boom followed by the trough period of stagnation were not the sole factors that triggered the overall disillusionment of the Japanese. Other grave reasons can be traced back to Japan's 1945 defeat in World War II, which can be labelled the foundation of the contemporary Japanese state. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (**Appendix 2.**) and its prohibition of war did not only impact the immediate post-war years, but it has still lasting effects today. The Peace Constitution can be seen as the reason of Japan's inequality among nations. The war defeat, and more importantly the atomic war defeat, constitutes towards a crucial traumatic experience, and this specific event lingers in the unconscious of the Japanese.[122] Neo-nationalist thinkers find Japan abnormal, as they argue

[121] Fukui and Fukai, "The End of the Miracle", 40.
[122] Ivy, "Trauma's Two Times", 169-170.

that "normal" states have control over their constitutions and they can go to war when desired: "without the future of war, Japan is not a real state", and "without the futurity of war, there is no real escape from the postwar."[123] Arguably, Japan is in a frozen stagnation continuously re-living the moment of its defeat because there is no new war to come to re-write this collective memory.

Japan has been criticized at multiple occasions for not taking responsibility for its war crimes committed against Asians during WWII.[124] The catastrophes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 6 and 9, 1945) have been used to alter the national memory by focusing on the victimization of the Japanese rather than on the guilt over their own atrocities.[125] For instance, in 2007 Prime Minister Abe Shinzō claimed there was no "proof of coercion" of women into sexual slavery to serve the imperial military forces, despite the clear historical data that proves otherwise.[126] Anthropologist Marilyn Ivy argues that such extreme denials and alterations of memory suggest schizophrenic tendencies and a split personality. The cause of this behaviour lies in the trauma of defeat, which made the Japanese state alter historical facts and memories. Furthermore, this war defeat, backed by Japan's economic stagnation that directly triggered unemployment and suicide, all contribute towards such extreme situations as the 1995 terror attack.[127] Entering a war would be a cure for the war defeat, a therapy for the "castration" that de-masculinized the Japanese nation-state, which consequently left their impact on the Japanese society.[128]

The generation born in the 1950-1960s as part of the baby boom was the one that witnessed first-hand Japan's golden age exemplified by the economic boom of the 1970-1980s. Therefore, it was this generation that saw the peak, and also participated in the decline and collapse of the economy. It was them, who either failed or learnt to be flexible and rely on creativity to survive and be the major forces of the cultural boom of the 1990s and 2000s that greatly influenced the world culturally. The recession enhanced Japan's national cool and brought out the potential to overturn the country's rigid social hierarchy system. Previously

[123] Ibid, 171.
[124] Fifield, "A (very) short history of Japan's war apologies", https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/08/12/a-very-short-history-of-japans-war-apologies/.
[125] Ivy, "Trauma's Two Times", 172. Such atrocities include for instance the Nanking incident of 1937 in China, during which murder, rape, looting and the burning down of the city resulted in grave casualties.
[126] Ibid, 173-174.
[127] Ibid, 177.
[128] Ibid, 178.

inventiveness and originality were looked down on, but in the 1990s these principles became the foundations on which entrepreneurs could capitalize and establish powerful industries.[129] Japan's Lost Decade relied on the innovativeness of these industries -- graphic-, toy- and video game design, music, fashion, literature, independent publishing, freelance journalism, film making, manga- and anime production, as well as contemporary art – that became the winners (*kachigumi*)[130] and the protagonists of Cool Japan (*kakkoii Nihon*).[131] Driven by the baby boom generation's imaginativeness, various artistic pieces of different media contributed to the Cool Japan image, which at the same time often used war-imagery that the creators did not experience first-hand but unavoidably inherited through family, education, or societal behaviours.

This chapter explores how the Cool Japan imagery became part of a government-sponsored Japan Brand (*Nihon Burando*) strategy, which succeeded in projecting a novel Japanese image to foreign audiences, including America. Such form of 'soft' power, in lieu of the military-based 'hard' power disabled by Article 9, made it possible for Japan to invade the global-, including American market with popular culture. Such 'victory' was important for the Japanese: instead of 'hard' industrial power, technology, or war, Japanese play fantasies transmitted through 'soft' technology of manga, anime, and video games conquered the world.[132] This chapter discusses the role of contemporary art as an important factor of establishing the renewed Japanese image of Cool in the West. Takashi Murakami's (b. 1962) movement of Superflat will be carefully considered in light of the Cool Japan's consumerist culture.

From Japanese Sub-culture to Global Fame: The Success of Cool Japan Explained

Meanwhile in America, children of the late 1990s and 2000s began to connect Japan with its highly popular cultural export products, like Nintendo video games, Sony's Walkman, and Pokémon (abbreviation of Pocket Monsters). This image differed from the previous

[129] McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool", 51.
[130] Koh, "Murakami's 'little Boy' Syndrome", 400. The terms *Kachigumi* (winner) and *Makegumi* (loser) appeared in the post-bubble era as a reference to the widening gap between the rich and the poor of Japanese society. The winner might refer to the rich, but also could point towards those competitive entrepreneurs who triumphed over hardships and achieved success.
[131] Favell, *Before and after Superflat*, 83.
[132] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, 31.

associations of Japan with geisha, tea ceremony, kamikaze pilots, or brands like Honda, Toyota or Mitsubishi. While, as discussed in the previous chapter, the derogative image of militarist Japan (WWII period) was elevated by an exoticized, mystified land (1950-60s), followed by the 'Corporate Japan' of a work-oriented enterprise society (1970-80s), now this imagery shifted again to be associated with the Empire of Cool.[133] Japan became the first class producer of imaginative fare, which included commodities of youth-oriented popular culture centred on the "golden triangle" of anime, manga, and computer/video games.[134] Industries specializing in these mediums follow the "media mix strategy", which refers to several media-based industries that are directly linked to each other.[135] For instance, Pokémon was originally produced in 1996 as a game made for Nintendo's Game Boy, but received several anime adaptations due to its great success, accompanied by card games and various other merchandises. The production of original soundtrack CDs, paperback books, fanzines, and the wide repertoire of character merchandises ranging from action figurines, to posters and stationary goods are similarly common practices in supporting fellow industries.

These products were able to create a craze amongst American children, who became infatuated with Japanese culture, which often inspired them to learn about, or even travel to Japan. A comparison exists with the post-war generation of kids, who seeing Japan's economic success were aspired to do business in Japan, which caused them to learn more about the country and its culture.[136] But this time affection derived from cultural products entirely that evoked an emotional attachment in children, which oftentimes grew to become passionate nostalgia as the generation matured. It is important to note that this infatuation did not appear at random: similarly to the grave events that happened in Japan, Americans were affected by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2011 and natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina (23-31 August 2005). Shock, fear and disillusionment characterized American thought after these catastrophes, which visuals became imprinted on the minds of people. Writer and journalist Roland Kelts argues that 9/11 had the imagery similar to anime, unrealistic and extremely visual with its effects.[137] Therefore, it can be suggested that Japanese animation's appeal derives from the unconscious motivation to digest these happenings, process the grief and move

[133] Daliot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy", 247.
[134] Kelts, *Japanamerica*, 73.
[135] Ahn, *Animated Subjects*, 27-28.
[136] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, 22.
[137] Kelts, *Japanamerica*, 30-34.

forward. Japanese media culture became a success in America due to its potential to erase the pessimism and discontent that followed 9/11.[138]

Furthermore, another appeal associated with Japanese cultural exports derive from a shifting power-balance consequential to globalisation. As the Cold War ended, Japan's rise of cultural exports enabled its cultural power (*bunka pawa*) to match the country's economic dominance of the 1980s. Gradually, Japan became a generator of consumer goods that appealed increasingly to foreign markets, including America. While American cultural power was especially dominant worldwide in the previous decades, such as the Americanization in Occupied Japan, now in the capitalist and post-cold war period of geopolitics American cultural hegemony has begun to disperse. The former Western-oriented power became de-centred, which resulted in the expansion of new consumer markets and other sources of cultural influence in determining global trends.[139] While in the 16th to the 20th centuries Western Europe and North America were the major capitalist epicentres, by the new millennium a 'new' region, East Asia triumphed over the 'old' regions of capitalist concentrations of power. Media industries and the producers of Japanese culture started to play an influential role in global cultural flows, which was previously dominated by the primarily American hegemony of cultural force.[140]

Cultural imperialism implies a one-way flow of culture from the dominant to the dominated. The dominance of American popular culture, which has been emphasized by the US's status in the world as economic and political superpower, was continuously disseminated globally to project American consumerist values and cultural ideologies. However, the Americanization of global culture disappeared as globalization and shift in world-dominance de-centralized, then re-centralized major producers of culture, including for instance Japan in the 1990s and 2000s. Importantly, the shift from cultural imperialism to globalisation also focused on regional and local differences, or preferences, in consuming global culture. Often the "culturally odourless" (*mukokuseki*) but still Japanese products succeeded in global markets through the strategy of glocalism, or glocalisation. This term refers to the effort not to impose

[138] Similar disillusionments occurred in American history. As briefly referred to in Chapter 1, Bostonians became frustrated due to the heavy industrialization, urbanizing infrastructure and changes on societal level around the turn of the century. The Cold War period also had several discouraging events, such as military conflicts or political failures, which made Americans shift their attention elsewhere, such as towards Japanese arts and culture.
[139] Allison, *Millennial Monsters*, 23.
[140] Ching, "Globalizing the Regional", 236-237.

a standard product or image everywhere the same way, but tailor it to the needs of local markets.[141]

In the 1990s Japan's capitalizing potential lied in the "culturally odourless" products of consumer technologies, comics-cartoons, and computer/video-games, also referred to as three C's.[142] *Mukokuseki* suggests the mixing of elements of multiple cultural origins, and implies the erasure of ethnic and cultural characteristics associated with Japan.[143] This is mainly achieved via the adoption of neutral characters through their names and physical characteristics, the use of universal storylines, and the inclusion of non-Japanese settings. However, scholars note that this Japaneseness lies, ironically, in the presence of *mukokuseki*, which is exactly the erasure of the physical signs of Japaneseness from the visual imagery. These products were intended to be culturally neutral, but they were still considered as distinctively "made-in-Japan" with a uniquely "Japanese fragrance".[144] Sociologist Kōichi Iwabuchi labels this character a hybrid, which mixes various cultural traits.[145] He emphasizes that this neutrality implies a degree of Americanization to hide Japaneseness:[146] "the origins of Japanese popular culture can be found in American popular culture."[147] Consequently, products of Japanese consumer culture are widely seen as Japanese, even though they were produced to be neutral, or Americanized, as Americanization was considered to be the most universal. Still, Western consumer taste underwent "Japanization", a process that was carefully manipulated by Japan as part of a Japan Brand government policy.[148]

The global success of Japanese popular culture resulted in its use as soft power. In 2002 the Japanese government introduced a new national policy, the Intellectual Property Strategic Program (*Chitekizaisan Suishin Keikaku*) (from now IPSP), which emphasized the potential of intangible intellectual property as key tool of diplomatic power. Japanese media content became viewed as a national resource that has the ability to shape other countries' preferences. In opposition to hard power, these primarily youth-oriented products of popular cultures were recognized as powerful sources that could contribute towards a positive Cool Japan image. Between 2004 and 2008, the Japan Brand Strategy was implemented to produce an attractive

[141] Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 46.
[142] Ibid, 27.
[143] Ibid, 71.
[144] Iwabuchi, "How "Japanese" is Pokémon", 59-61.
[145] Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 19.
[146] Iwabuchi, "How "Japanese" is Pokémon", 67.
[147] Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 71.
[148] Ibid, 31-32.

Japan and revitalize cultural imagery.[149] Even today, a budget is dedicated to creating a Japanese image abroad, which is produced by the Japanese Foreign Ministry, the Japan Foundation and the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunka-chō) collectively. Besides the popular culture dedicated to the masses, contemporary art also plays a serious role in their mission, since several recent artworks promoting the current image of Japan can be seen at important museums worldwide, at the top demand of auction houses, and on the walls of millionaires.[150] This shall be discussed later in more detail.

The success of the Japan Brand initiative and the rise of Cool Japan could not have been achieved without the welcoming reception and interest abroad. In February 2002 Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō announced the interest in utilizing intellectual property of creative content products in creating the Japan Brand. This was followed by the influential article of American journalist Douglas McGray in May 2002 that brought forth a worldwide recognition. McGray's *Japan's Gross National Cool* introduced a new image of an Empire of Cool, and recognized Japan as "more [of] a cultural superpower today than it [was] in the 1980s, when it was an economic one."[151] McGray also referred to political scientist Joseph Nye's argument (1990) and suggested that Japanese Cool can be used as a resource of soft power in cultural diplomacy. Nye previously argued that today flexible, intangible power, such as knowledge, culture, ideology shall promote a country's attractiveness, and influence the political environment by getting other countries to do what one wants.[152] Following McGray's impact, in July 2002 the Intellectual Policy Outline draft was introduced, which aimed at making Japan an intellectual property-based nation.

Meanwhile, the IPSP of 2005 aimed to re-introduce the distinct Japanese "cultural odour" that was deliberately neglected or erased during the 1990s. The Cool Japan initiative consciously developed a Japan Brand, which foreigners could associate with the Japan image. In contrast to the aim for neutrality in the 1990s, Japanese content products of the 2000s became national symbols that had a capitalizing potential to improve Japanese economy via elevating Japan's image abroad. The IPSP began manipulating Japanese content business: "through the collaborative efforts of tourism institutions and cultural diplomacy, we need to establish and strengthen a Japan Brand". Furthermore, lifestyle-based businesses of food, regional brands and fashion were also taken into consideration to convey the attractiveness (*miryoku*) of Japan.

[149] Daliot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy", 248-249.
[150] Favell, *Before and after Superflat*, 7.
[151] McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool", 44.
[152] Nye, "Soft Power", 164-168.

While the Japan Brand was made to project a new and revitalizing imagery of Japan, it inevitable touched upon the self-exoticizing discourse that has been used in various contexts before. The established exotic images of Mt. Fuji, cherry blossoms and samurai remained central to what foreigners associated with the country, which suggests that contemporary popular culture certainly has close ties to the long aesthetic and cultural tradition of Japan. Cool Japan is still Japan, a place where the "old and new co-exist".[153]

The 2005 aims of the IPSP focused on expanding the content-business industry, but the 2008 goals set out to make Japan a top-class content world power. The support of contemporary Japanese popular culture increased by broadening fields of influence, such as international exhibitions, conferences, local competitions in the arts and media, awards for successful Japanese artists and designers. An initiative was made to promote the work of non-Japanese manga artists, whose art was based on the Japanese comic tradition. According to foreign minister Asō Tarō, the Japan Manga Grand Prize was created to promote a "bonding with Japan": "Manga is about love. Manga is about friendship. Manga is about growing-up. Manga is about everything—it knows absolutely no boundaries." Consequently, the Japanese manga medium has the universal language to forge friendships and unify people. Asō saw great potential in the rising popularity of manga and anime especially among the younger generation abroad, thus utilized these mediums as diplomatic tools: the cool and entertaining quality of these mediums became a serious business for the Japanese state.[154]

While the IPSP made major steps on a governmental level to promote Japan abroad, it lacked in some aspects. For instance, the state-led collective action of the Japan Brand Strategy was hard to implement as the Japanese market structure was getting increasingly fragmented in the 1990s. In addition, the creative sector dealing with culture generates content through a bottom-up approach, which cannot be completely unified under a uniform government-sponsored initiative. Furthermore, the contemporary global imagery of Japan is equally emphasized by non-Japanese factors, such as the media abroad. This cannot be influenced by the Japanese themselves, it is not within their scope. As revealed by the extreme example of the 'sushi police', which was a Japanese state-sponsored initiative to review all sushi restaurants globally and certify them based on to what degree their cuisine is authentically Japanese, the Japanese government learnt that it cannot control how products of the Japan Brand are handled or appropriated abroad.[155]

[153] Daliot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy", 251-254.
[154] Lam, "Japan's Quest for 'Soft Power'", 351.
[155] Daliot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy", 257.

Overall, it took over five years for Cool Japan to reach the consciousness of the bureaucrats of IPSP. Despite it being primarily a subculture catered towards Japanese youth, high government-sources saw capitalizing potential in the three C's, which could eventually elevate Japan's image world-wide and contribute towards the stagnating economy. Before this recognition, which was also triggered by McGray's contribution, the culture of *otaku* was looked down on.[156] It was only in the 2000s when the world started to recognize this Japanese subculture, but no one was looking at the specific moment when Japan became the 'coolest' place on the globe during the golden age of *otaku* in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the era of Cool Japan came to an end on 11 March 2011 when the Tōhoku earthquake followed by a tsunami and nuclear accidents at the Fukushima Power Plant devastated Japan. As a conclusion, the two decades of Japanese Cool succeeded in transmitting a Japanese image that made Japan understood, loved and respected throughout the world (*Nihonrikai*).[157] Harnessing popular culture for national interest provided the base for a government-sponsored marketing strategy to attract international consumers, including establishing a lasting market in America. While the government's motivation of using culture as a mean of soft power was driven by economic and political motives, the Cool Japan ideology functioned based on the creative products of Japanese popular culture.

Superflat and *Little Boy*: Exhibiting the Arts of Edo, Trauma and Kawaii

The Cool Japan craze of the 1990-2000s left an impact on the contemporary art world, in which the newly emerging art of Superflat began its global dominance. Created by Takashi Murakami at the turn of the millennium, Superflat became a contemporary art movement in which artists reflected on the socio-cultural and political changes within Japanese society, which still carried the heavy impacts of war-time trauma, atomic bombs and American subordination. While previously Zen Buddhism, traditional paintings, or ukiyo-e woodblock prints constituted the

[156] Ahn, *Animated Subjects*, 80, 84. *Otaku* can be described as devoted fans of Japanese popular culture with limited social skills and prospects for the future. The increasing popularity of anime and related products in the West since the 1990s shifted the previously derogatory associations towards the *otaku* in Japan. These negative connections derived from the case of Tsutomu Miyazaki, the 'Otaku Murderer', who abducted and killed four young girls between 1988 and 1989. He was labelled *otaku* because of his pornographic collection based on this subculture's fantasies. Now the term *otaku* has more positive connotations. For instance, Takashi Murakami is a self-proclaimed *otaku* artist, whose influence enhanced the institutional hype over *otaku*.
[157] Daliot-Bul, "Japan Brand Strategy", 259.

mainstream of Japanese high art displayed in museums, the current trend focused on the *otaku*-subculture inspired Cool Japan of maid cafes, street fashion, manga and anime.[158] However, the international sales and consistent museum visibility of Superflat abroad suggests that the West was highly receptive towards the vision of Japan proposed by Murakami and his fellow Superflat artists.[159]

Aside from being an art movement, Superflat also refers to a series of three exhibitions: Superflat Trilogy. In 2001 Murakami curated the exhibition titled *Superflat* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles, which then toured the United States and arrived to Minneapolis and Seattle. It featured works from Murakami and 19 contemporary Japanese artists, who were brought together under the umbrella term Superflat. The exhibition was consciously designed to impress Americans by radically altering their view how they perceived Japanese art so far. This was followed by two other exhibitions: *Coloriage/Kawaii!! Summer Vacation* (2002) was on show at the Fondation Cartier de l'art contemporain in Paris and *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture* (2005) was featured at the Japan Society in New York.[160]

These shows created an assemblage of Japan's distinct artistic and cultural traits that Westerners associated the country with. They combined the appealing pop culture of Cool Japan, the ancient Japanese arts and traditional culture, as well as the infamous happenings of WWII that determined US-Japanese relations, which also served the aim to reflect on the history of the two countries.[161] The exhibitions were designed to be eye-catching, provocative and often shocking to bring out a maximum impact from the viewers: vivid colours, large-scale formats, and nudity were used to achieve this. On one level the focus was on to catch the viewers' attention through formal qualities, but on the other hand context was provided to the multiple aspects of Japanese culture, history and society that are all relevant to understand what Japanese contemporary art is today.[162] Made by Japanese artists, the shows deliberately catered to the tastes, desires and expectations of Western viewers through a conscious strategy. Followed by the example of the Japanese government's soft power-based cultural diplomacy

[158] Favell, *Before and after Superflat*, 10.
[159] Ibid, 8. Takashi Murakami's *My Lonesome Cowboy* (1998) was purchased by François-Henri Pinault at the auction house Sotheby's of New York in May 2008 for $15 million, which makes the artwork the most successful Japanese art ever based on international sales.
[160] This section examines only two exhibitions of the Superflat Trilogy: *Superflat* (2000) and *Little Boy* (2005) have been both featured in the United States, thus they can be connected more closely to the flow of the argument.
[161] Osenton, *Reassembling Symbolic Japan*, 18.
[162] Ibid, 54.

to sell the Cool Japan image abroad, Murakami implemented similar methods in his promotion of Superflat through 'soft marketing'.[163]

The Superflat exhibitions worked on multiple levels of meaning that used form to convey deeper references towards the formation of Japanese art history, culture and society. For instance, Murakami relied on the visual language of traditional Edo period paintings and woodblock prints from the 17-19th centuries to draw parallels with the flat visual codes of manga and anime of the postmodern age.[164] This idea derived from art critic Nobuo Tsuji who in 1992 connected the formal characteristics of these art forms to that of the stylistic attributes of contemporary popular culture. According to Tsuji, the decorative, playful and caricature-like properties of ukiyo-e prints survive today in the culture of *otaku*.[165] However, it is important to note that *otaku* culture is a hybrid that derives not solely from Edo. The post-1945 influx of American commercial culture impacted the development of anime and manga industries. An overlapping aesthetic relationship exists between Japan and the West: while flatness is primarily a Japanese artistic quality that survived in Japanese graphic traditions, the genres of anime and manga are equally influenced by the western comic tradition.[166] It cannot be disregarded that American popular culture also left its impact on Japanese art during the post-WWII years. According to critic and philosopher Hiroki Azuma, "otaku culture could not have existed at all without the influence of American subcultures." He argues that Japanese subcultural forms of anime, manga, science fiction novels and computer/video-games have American origins due to the years of American Occupation.[167]

Nevertheless, Murakami calls Superflat an 'original concept', a specifically Japanese expression, even though it has been impacted by global cultural flows and the central marketing aims to popularize Japanese contemporary art in the West on a primary level.[168] Murakami emphasizes that Superflat has a distinctive Japanese sensitivity, even though it incorporates Western culture that derives from the post-war inflow of American popular culture. He calls this his "soy sauce" strategy which he describes as follows:

> "Japanese contemporary art has a long history of trying to hide the soy sauce. Perhaps they will strengthen the flavour to please the foreign palette, […]. I see the need to

[163] Ibid, 3.
[164] Ahn, *Animated Subjects*, 113.
[165] Koh, "Murakami's 'little Boy' Syndrome", 396-397. Koh references Tsuji (1992).
[166] Sharp, "Superflatlands", 46.
[167] Koh, "Murakami's 'little Boy' Syndrome", 397-398. Koh references Azuma (2001).
[168] Murakami, *Super Flat*, 5.

> create a universal taste – a common tongue – without cheating myself and my Japanese core… I continue to blend seasonings… […] but my central axis of my creation is stable… at its core, my standard of 'beauty' is one cultivated by the Japan that has been my home since my birth in 1962."[169]

Overall, while Murakami recognizes American impacts, his Superflat can be seen as an attempt to re-use the pre-Western, indigenously Japanese perspective in objects that also derive from a Westernized popular culture. In an equally important way, Murakami's inspiration is also taken from the early Edo period eccentric artists because of the way how the spectator's gaze flows through a composition, which is generally described through the use of a zigzag pattern and the acceleration-deceleration of eye-movement.[170] Murakami's *A Theory of Super Flat Japanese Art* within the *Superflat* exhibition catalogue lists various examples that demonstrates connection between eccentric paintings and contemporary animation. For instance, Kanō Sansetsu's (1589-1651) *Pheasant and the Plum Tree* (1631) (**Fig. 18.**) painted on sliding doors at the Myōshin-ji Temple in Kyōto, forces the spectator's gaze to move forward – from left to right – through a series of forms. Firstly, starting with the main panel of the second door from the left, the branch of the plum tree leads the eye sideways, then indicates a zigzag motion as the trunk, ivy, and plover demands. The gaze might pause upon the appearance of the little bird, but soon moves in a vertical direction, then sideways, to discover a rock upon which the main attraction of the composition, a pheasant sits.[171] Murakami draws parallels between such eccentric compositions and Yoshinori Kanada's (1952-2009) dynamic movements composed for animations of explosions and climatic battles scenes. His technique is based on almost acrobatic movements that are timed uniquely to control spectator gaze through a fluid, zigzagging motion, as exemplified in *Galaxy Express 999* (1979), *Akira* (1988), or several Ghibli movies.[172]

To further highlight the Edo connection, the Edo period has been generally viewed as representative of Japan's cultural traditions and the symbol of Japaneseness. In recent decades Edo became part of a nostalgic yearning that manifested itself in postmodern Japanese society,

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[169] Sharp, "Superflatlands", 41. Sharp references Kaikaikiki Co. Ltd & Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, 2001, 130.
[170] Cornyetz, "Murakami Takashi", 182.
[171] Murakami, *Super Flat*, 11.
[172] Ibid, 115. Murakami has been highly influenced by Kanada's animation. He writes: "To think about "super flatness" is to think about Yoshinori Kanada. In tracing the sources of his lines, one passes through Horst Janssen, Itō Jakuchū and Kanō Sansetsu of the "lineage of eccentrics", Damien Hirst, Gerhard Richter, and Katsuhiro Otomo. My fantastic journey in search of "super flatness" began with Yoshinori Kanada's animation."

and the revival of Edo practices which have been 'indigenous' to Japan became fashionable again.[173] The Edo period became a "historical imaginary and invented 'other' in relation to which modernity posited itself." From the early 1870s to the mid-1990s Edo was viewed differently based on the ideas of modernism: Edo became not a historical period but also as an invented cultural space, a "repository of traditions" (*dentō*) connected to Japanese distinctiveness. During the late 19th century of westernization Edo was seen as dark and feudal, while in the postmodern 1980s Edo appeared dazzling compared to the traumatized, commercial and excessively Americanised Japan of the time. In the conservative, neo-nationalist and uncertain era of the 1990s Edo was highly appealing, which manifested itself in the arts as well, as it can be seen in Murakami's *Superflat Manifesto*.[174]

While the Edo connection played a great part in formulating the Superflat ideology, the role of America was equally significant in the Superflat exhibitions, especially in the 2005 exhibit of *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*. Murakami's *Little Boy* was about historical and oedipal trauma experienced after WWII. On one level, Little Boy was the code name of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. The exhibition's subtitle of *Japan's* Exploding *Subculture* is also a reference to the atomic bombs. Murakami's original idea for the title was *Impotence*, since the artist wanted to highlight that, metaphorically, Japan can no longer be a phallic, thus non-castrated, and therefore masculine and adult nation, which is consequential to America's infantilizing power.[175] This brings the reader to the second interpretation: Little Boy can also refer to the Japanese state, as a helpless and dependent country in the need for 'big brother America' to show the way. General McArthur similarly likened Japan to a child as the Occupation began: "measured by the standards of modern civilization, the Japanese would be like a boy of twelve."[176]

It can be argued that post-WWII Japan's victimization generated the infantilization of the state and the impotence of an entire culture.[177] Primarily it was the impact of the atomic bombs and Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution that put Japan in the role of a child and made the country into a "castrated nation-state".[178] *Little Boy* and the accompanying catalogue dedicated

[173] Sharp, "Superflatlands", 42.
[174] Gluck, "The Invention of Edo", 262-263, 275. Edo-memory appeared in three distinctive forms throughout Japanese history which was the result of the prevailing political climate and ongoing international relations that determined public consciousness. Gluck calls these National, Oppositional and Commodified Edos.
[175] Ivy, "Trauma's Two Times", 180.
[176] Dower, *War without Mercy*, 550.
[177] Ivy, "Trauma's Two Times", 179.
[178] Yano, "Wink on Pink", 685-686.

separate sections related to themes of atomic bombs, Occupation and post-war infantilization, such as artworks and further writings associated with mushroom clouds (p.12-17), Hiroshima (p.18-19), the movie *Godzilla* (1954) (p.20-21) and Article 9 (p.22-23). The exhibition for instance featured figurines of Godzilla, which symbolize the un-mourned war dead that come back to haunt Japan. Interestingly, despite the exhibition space being played as a sequence of large flat wall surfaces of colour, the section dedicated to the Godzilla was built to draw attention with the inclusion of a large black wall surface on which Article 9 was printed in enlarged white letters (**Figs. 19-20.**).[179]

In addition to the Little Boy references to the atomic bomb and infantilized Japan, *Little Boy* can also represent Murakami himself allied with the generations of Japanese people, out of whom some have experienced the war trauma themselves, and some whose parents or grandparents were directly impacted by the war. Importantly, the memory of war defeat still lives in the minds of the Japanese, as demonstrated by Murakami's exhibitions, and still determines the visual language and iconography behind Japanese arts and cultural products. Murakami suggests that the defeat in WWII, the atomic bombs, and the Americanization during the Occupation are all responsible for the current social and political state, which is flattened and infantilized. While images of war were absent from post-war Japanese art, the 1990s subculture of *otaku* initiated their revival, thus consequently they became part of the Superflat aesthetic as well.[180]

Another aspect of infantilization survived in the youth-oriented, feminized *kawaii* (cute) culture of the 1990-2000s' Cool Japan, which defined Japan as infantile and superficial.[181] As part of the IPSP initiative the Japanese government decided to capitalize on this cuteness: instead of masculine samurai warriors or suit-wearing salary-man, Japan chose a commercial, playful and childish aesthetic for promotion. Murakami has been also at the forefront of the global production and marketing of the Japanese cute through his Superflat exhibitions, which, for instance, included such *kawaii*-aesthetic promoting artists like Yoshitomo Nara (b. 1959), Chiho Aoshima (b. 1974), or Aya Takano (b. 1976). Interestingly, in several instances, their artworks successfully combined *kawaii* with war. Takano's *Fallin' Manma Air* (2000) (**Fig. 21.**) featured in *Superflat* (2001) shows that the horror of war linked to the American air force and the victimhood of the Japanese represented by the *kawaii* girl can be connected. *Fallin' Manma Air* successfully posits innocence against violence through the naked figure of the

[179] Ivy, "Trauma's Two Times", 180.
[180] Osenton, *Reassembling Symbolic Japan*, 43, 52.
[181] Yano, "Wink on Pink", 684.

young girl shown in close-up on the right hand-side, and the overwhelming presence of the airplanes that fill up the remaining space of the picture plane. The use of soft colours match the *kawaii* aesthetic, even though the subject matter reflects violence and threat.

To conclude, the main concept of Superflat remains its flattening. This concept works on multiple levels of meaning: on one hand it suggests the flat quality of artistic production, which has a long tradition in Japanese art history, thus consequently it is authentically Japanese. On another hand, the concept of flat can refer to the atomic bombs' flattening of the surface of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, flat can also imply the flattening of media culture promoted by the internet that heavily impacts contemporary information technology and the dissemination of culture on a global level. Murakami's Superflat Trilogy connects the pasts of traditional Japanese culture exemplified by an Edo-period longing, and the traumatic experiences of atomic bombs and infantilization as part of the impacts of WWII. These elements constitute towards the image of contemporary Japan, to which contemporary influences deriving from animated cultural products, and the digitality of the future through the common link of visuality of flatness are also added.[182] In the *Super Flat Manifesto* Murakami writes that the world of the future might be like Japan is today - "super flat," and that "'Super flatness' is the stage to the future."[183] This implies that Superflat was meant to be a global trend rather than a local drive.

While Murakami saw the future in Superflat, the concept together with the phenomenon of Cool Japan came to an end abruptly in 2011. The global dominance of Japanese Cool, which heavily allied with Superflat of the contemporary art world could no longer keep their dominance. Japan's two 'lost decades' of the 1990s and 2000s came into being from the disillusionment brought forward by socio-political changes, and were ended by another impactful trauma driven by a natural disaster. This event halted the image of Japan being Cool, which stopped the market-oriented cultural boom of this period that centred on the promotion of Japanese popular culture worldwide. In regard of the contemporary art scene, the 2011 disasters influenced artists to reconfigure their stance in society and engage in other ways to contribute to contemporary Japanese art, which no longer flattened history, centred on traumatic childhood or connected to *otaku* subculture.[184]

[182] Ahn, *Animated Subjects*, 111.
[183] Murakami, *Super Flat*, 5.
[184] Favell, *Before and after Superflat*, 229.

Conclusion

Inspired by the Cool Japan exhibitions in Leiden, Amsterdam and Antwerp, this MA thesis focused on the three waves of Japanophilia that appeared in the United States between 1876 and 2011 by questioning how they came into being, why they changed/disappeared, and what constituted their uniqueness. The appearance, display and promotion of Japanese visual arts and culture were considered in the context of shifting power dynamics in the world that altered according to political changes, military conflicts, economic booms/downfalls, and the globalization of culture. Upon the impact of different historical events, American perceptions towards Japanese arts and culture changed, fuelled by orientalist trends, wartime propaganda, or socio-cultural disillusionments, which resulted in the construction of complementary and derogatory stereotypes.

This thesis explored the identity of stakeholders who played an important role in importing and promoting Japanese art and culture in/to the United States. During the first wave of Japan craze (late 19th century), the Meiji government used arts as means of cultural diplomacy to demand the revision of treaties. In regard of the appearance of first museum collections, it was the New England-based Japan-enthusiasts' fascination that resulted in the inclusion of Japanese arts into the Western, primarily fine art-based establishments. In the second wave (late 1950s and early 1960s), the museum-oriented promotion of Japan was also achieved by wealthy collectors and patrons, whose influential backgrounds and status in socio-political spheres became beneficial for enhancing preference and visibility. In the third wave (1990s-2000s), the culture of Cool Japan became a promotional tool in the hands of Japanese government officials, who invented the Japan Brand to fashion an idealized empire of Cool.

The nature of the imported, exhibited and consumed Japanese artistic and cultural products were determined by the main platforms of events at which these appeared. The world fairs of Philadelphia (1876), Chicago (1893) and St. Louis (1904) featured Japanese architecture, fine- and decorative arts, as well as intangible elements of culture through musical-theatrical performances and the presence of Japanese people themselves to fashion the country as modern Westernized but authentically Japanese nation. Museums collected and exhibited primarily the high-art associated with Japan, but this changed towards the late 1980s when postmodernism drove cultural institutions to include more mass-culture-oriented

Japanese arts in exhibitions. Fuelled by this initiative, Superflat became a dedicated promoter of the popular culture of *otaku*, which became a great success worldwide.

The inflow of Japanese art and culture shaped American public opinion, and vice versa. Fuelled by the just fashionable stereotypes from romanticized idealisation, to war- and economy-fuelled disparagement and awe-inspiring coolness, attitudes towards Japanese arts and culture depended on the prevalent geopolitical, economic and sociocultural contexts. A cyclical pattern prevails towards the Japanese in American consciousness: started as an oriental nation and exotic 'Other', Japan became a threat during its imperialist expansionism that culminated in WWII. Then these patterns re-started: after the Occupation Japan was again appealing until its dominating presence as economic superpower challenged American hegemony. Finally, Cool Japan was globally fascinating and dominated the previously America-centred preference towards popular culture.

But Cool Japan came to an end. I argue, though, that a lasting fascination still exists towards the *otaku* subculture even today. Japanese artistic and cultural products of ancient tradition and popular mass-orientation are continuously fashionable, and are being promoted at world-wide cultural venues, including American museum exhibitions or anime-conventions at its forefront.[185] The coolness of Japan still dominates in American imagination. But why is Japan cool? The answer lies partly in its unique artistic tradition and fascinating contemporary culture. These might not be so successful without their careful marketing, and the Japanese' firm belief in their own uniqueness examined in *nihonjinron* discourses. It can be argued that the 'myth of Japanese uniqueness' is detectable in Japanese artistic and cultural products, which contributes towards their global favouring.[186] The *nihonjinron*-wise ignorant consumers of Japanese culture can unknowingly promote these products' exceptionality, which contributes towards the ongoing fascination towards things Japanese.

[185] Ahn, *Animated Subjects*, 83, 89. Anime conventions have been important platforms to promote *otaku* culture. In North America one of the major conventions is 'Otakon' (contraction of Otaku Convention), which began in 1994. Other early examples include 'A-Kon' in Dallas (1990), 'AnimeCon' in San Jose (1991) and its sequel 'Anime Expo' (1992), which moved to Anaheim. In 2005 there were about 90 large-scale anime conventions in the US.

[186] '*Myth of Japanese Uniqueness'* is the title of Peter N. Dale's book (1986), which focuses on the discourse of *nihonjinron*.

Appendix 1.

WORLDWIDE FASCINATION IN FOCUS

Pokémon, Hello Kitty, Super Mario, Godzilla, robots and samurai: these icons of Japanese visual culture are famous the world over. People everywhere watch anime (cartoons), read manga (comic strips) and play Japanese games.

What makes Japan so cool? Is it the cute characters with their huge eyes? Is it the dark tales filled with malice and monsters? Or is it the creativity of the makers, and their imaginative storylines? Is the international interest in Japanese visual culture relatively new, due to the success of anime and manga, among others? Or does it date back further?

Step into the world of Japanese visual culture and discover what makes it so unique and fascinating. Learn all about the country's long tradition of painting and drawing, and the interaction with other visual cultures. Meet the icons, their predecessors, the makers and the fans.

This introductory text was displayed on the walls of the entrances of the Cool Japan exhibition in Leiden, Amsterdam and Antwerp. It was also included in the exhibition guide provided by Museum aan de Stroom.

Accessed 1 July 2020,
https://www.mas.be/nl/cooljapan

Appendix 2.

CHAPTER II

Renunciation of War

Article 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

(2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution
Promulgated on November 3, 1946
Came into effect on May 3, 1947

Accessed 29 June 2020,
https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

List of Images

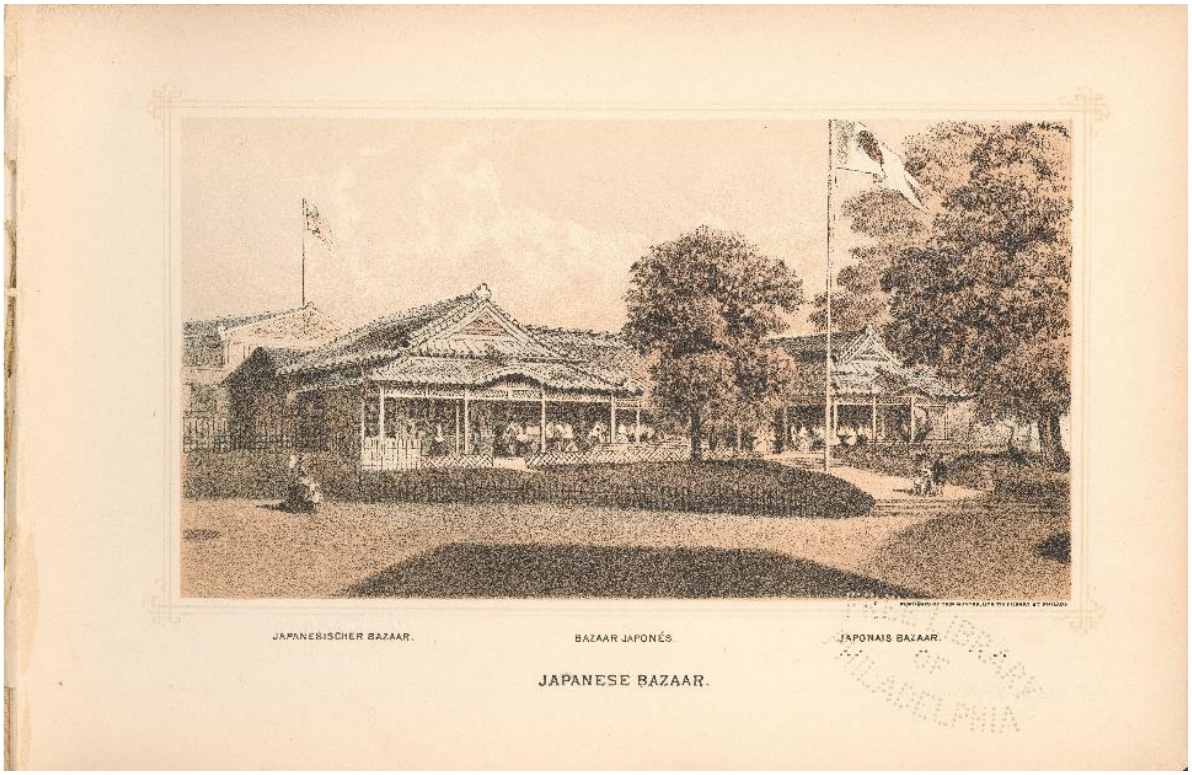

Figure 1. Westcott, Thompson. Centennial portfolio. Thomas Hunter, lithographer. *Japanese Bazaar*. 1876. Lithograph. 12 x 22 cm. Item no.: c090510.

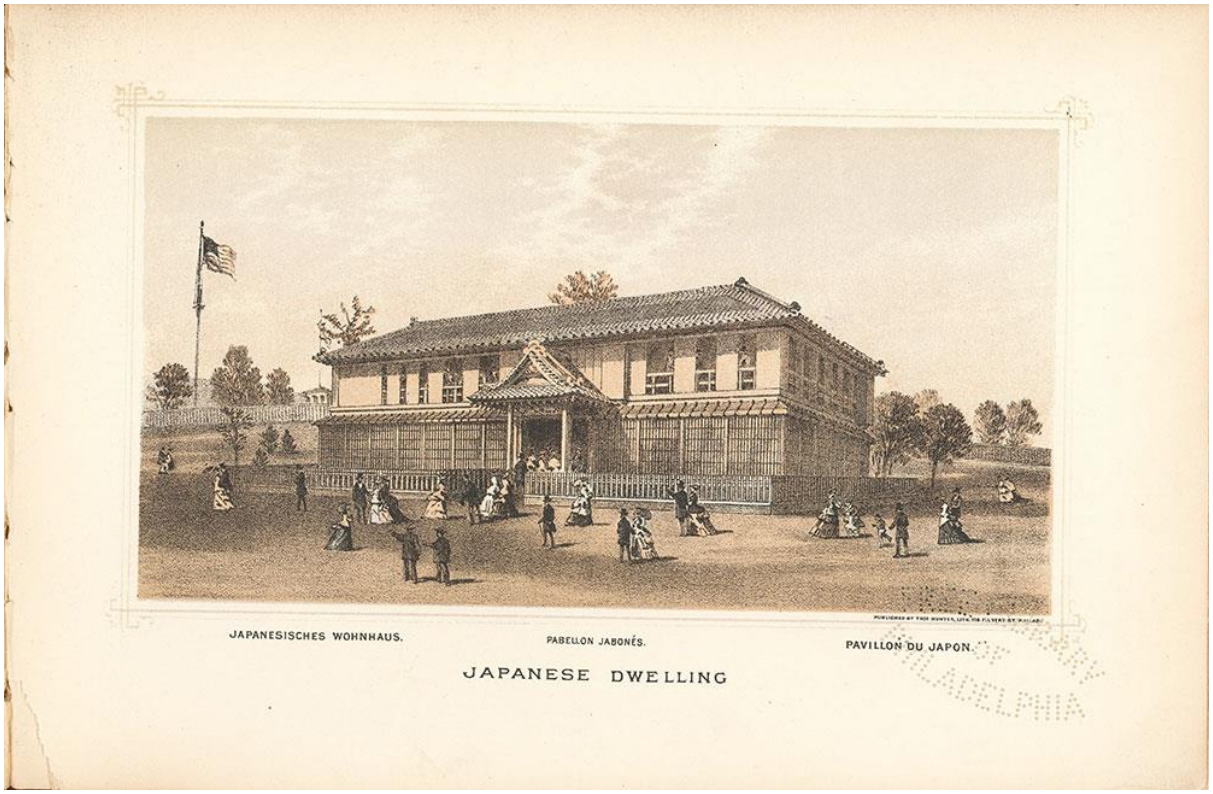

Figure 2. Westcott, Thompson. Centennial portfolio. Thomas Hunter, lithographer. *Japanese Dwelling*. 1876. Lithograph. 12 x 22 cm. Item no.: c090230.

Figure 3. Centennial Photographic Co. *Japanese pottery*. Photograph Series II. 1876. Album print. 26 x 21 cm. Item no.: c021889.

Figure 4. Centennial Photographic Co. *Mammoth Japanese Bronze Vase. Bronze vase -- Japan*. Photograph Series II. 1876. Album print. 26 x 21 cm. Item no.: c022165.

Figure 5. Centennial Photographic Co. *Japanese bronzes—birds. Japanese Articles*. Photograph Series II. 1876. Album print. 26 x 21 cm. Item no.: c022193.

Figure 6. Centennial Photographic Co. *Japanese Screens and Bronzes*. Photograph Series II. 1876. Album print. 26 x 21 cm. Item no.: c022186.

Figure 7. Centennial Photographic Co. *Selections from Japanese section--for "A. and I." Carved Wardrobe-Japan*. Photograph Series II. 1876. Album print. 20 x 12 cm. Item no.: c011582.

Figure 8. Centennial Photographic Co. *Lacquer and Bamboo Furniture-Japan*. Photograph Series II. 1876. Album print. 21 x 26 cm. Item no.: c022212.

Figure 9. Centennial Photographic Co. *Shippokuwaisha's exhibit--Japanese section*. *Main Building-Japan*. Photograph Series II. 1876. Album print. 21 x 26 cm. Item no.: c022247.

Figure 10. *Jackson Park. Ho-o-den (Phoenix Hall)*. Series II: Buildings and Grounds. Undated. Photographic print. 8.8 x 9.0 cm. Architect: Kuru, Masamichi. Landscape Designer: Olmsted, Frederick Law. Chicago, Illinois. Archival Photographic Files Collection. Repository: University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center. Item no.: apf2-04518.

Figure 11. Arnold, Charles Dudley. *World's Columbian Exposition. Japanese Tea Garden 33*. Series III: Events. 1893. Photographic print. 15.3 x 20.3 cm. Architect: Kuru, Masamichi. Landscape Designer: Olmsted, Frederick Law. Hyde Park, Chicago, Illinois. Archival Photographic Files Collection. Addenda. C. D. Arnold Photographs. Repository: University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center. Item no.: apf3-00033.

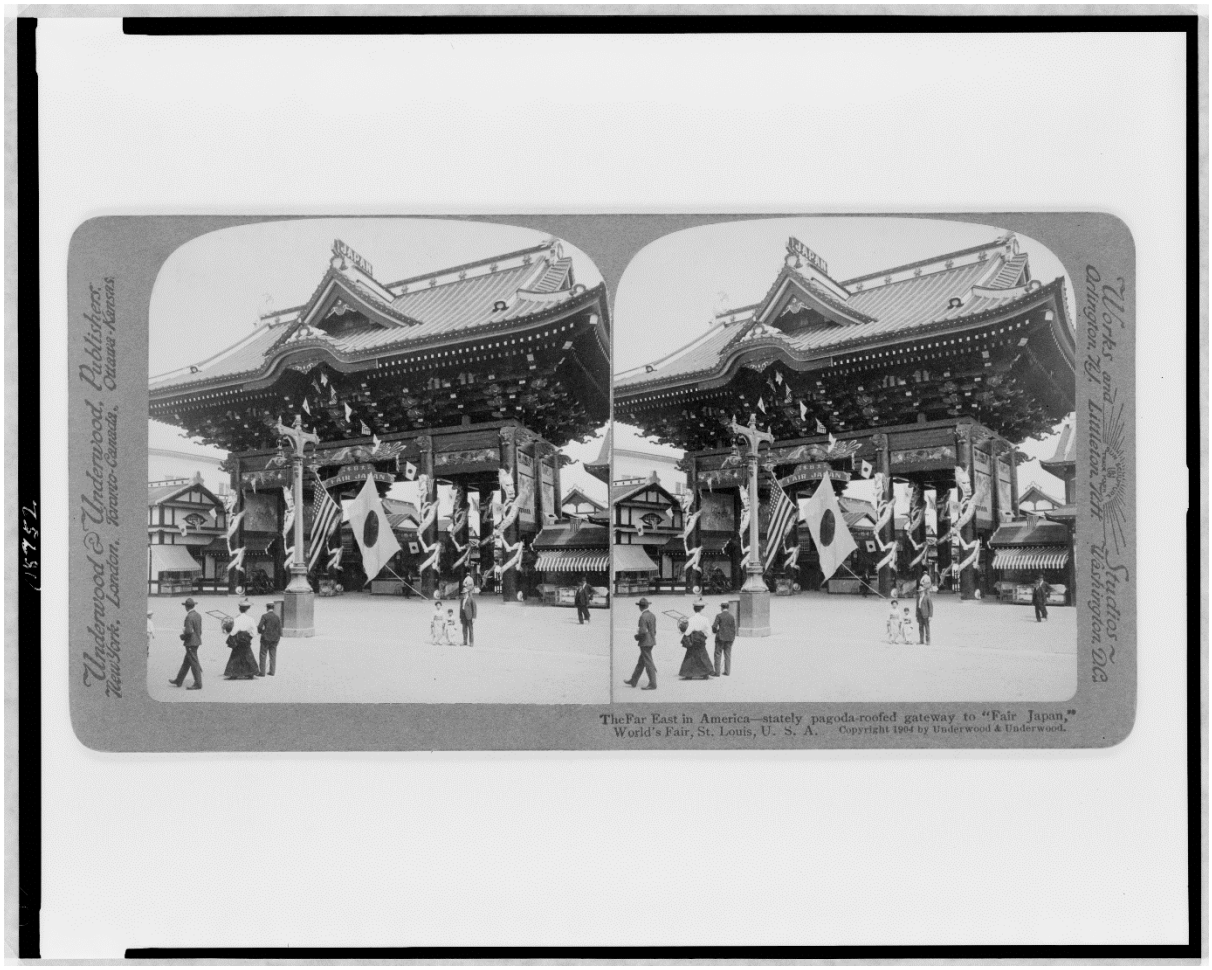

Figure 12. Underwood & Underwood. *The Far East in America - stately pagoda-roofed gateway to "Fair Japan," World's Fair, St. Louis, U.S.A.* 1904. Photographic print on stereo card: stereograph. Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. Item no.: cph 3c18752; cph 3a14844.

Figure 13. Underwood & Underwood. *Japan in America - pretty maids in garden before a Japanese tea-house, World's Fair, St. Louis, U.S.A.* 1904. Photographic print on stereo card: stereograph. Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. Item no.: cph 3c18754.

Figure 14. Underwood & Underwood. *Lovely Japanese garden east from ferris wheel, (Machinery Bldg. beyond), World's Fair, St. Louis, U. S. A.* 1904. Photographic print on stereo card: stereograph. Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA. Item no.: stereo 1s03196.

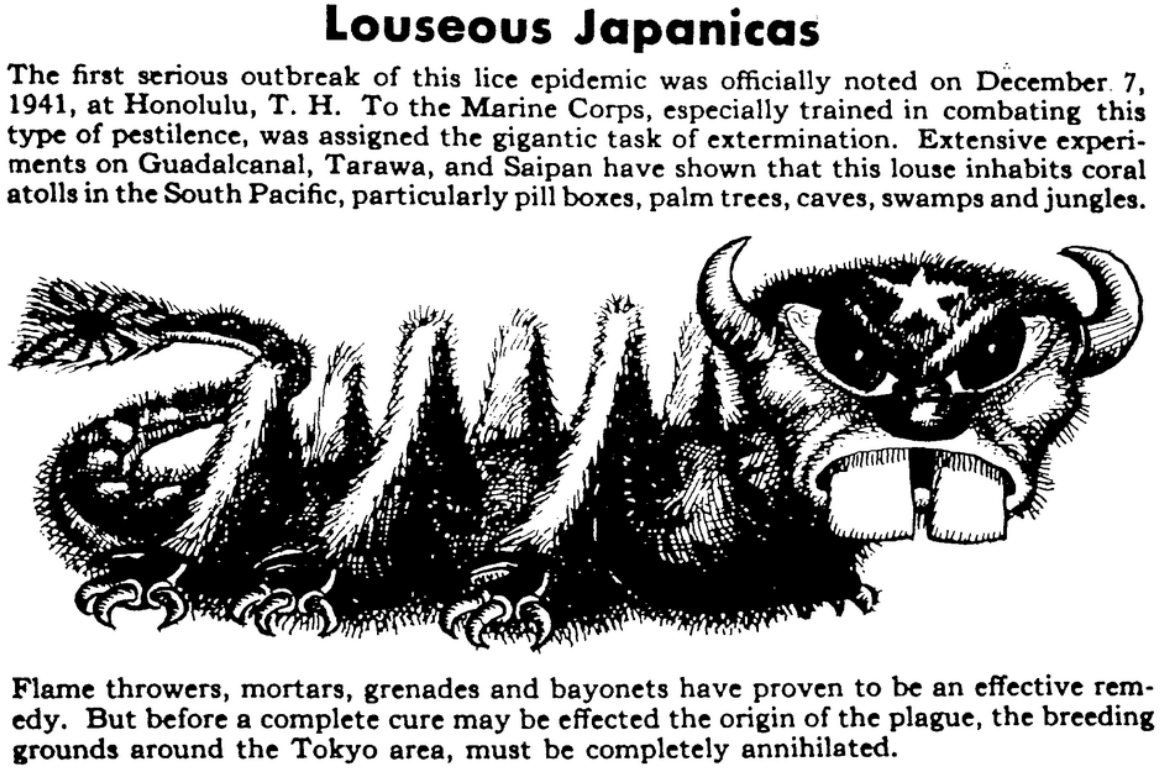

Figure 15. "Louseous Japanicas". Illustration included in the US marine monthly magazine of *Leatherneck* in March 1945. © Marine Corps Association & Foundation.

THE MONKEY FOLK

"Always pecking at new things are the bandar-log. This time, if I have any eyesight, they have pecked down trouble for themselves."—*The Jungle Book.*

Figure 16. E.H. Shepard. "The Monkey Folk". Illustration published in the British *Punch* magazine in mid-January 1942. © Punch Limited.

Figure 17. Fred Lasswell. Cover of the US *Leatherneck* magazine from September 1945. © Marine Corps Association & Foundation.

Figure 18. Kanō Sansetsu. *Pheasant and the Plum Tree.* 1631. Colours and gold leaf on washi paper. Sliding door panels, set of four. 184 x 94 cm each. Tenkyu-in Temple, a subtemple of Myoshin-ji Temple, Kyōto.

Figure 19. Sheldan Collins. Installation shot, *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*. 2001. Yuji Sakai, Godzilla figures, various scales and dates. Foreground: 1989, scale 1:80.

Figure 20. Sheldan Collins. Installation shot, *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*. 2001. Yuji Sakai, Godzilla figures, various scales and dates. Background: 1989, scale 1:80.

Figure 21. Aya Takano. *Fallin' Manma Air*. 2000. Acrylic on canvas. 530 x 455 x 21 mm.

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Fig. 15. Dower 1986, Ill. 8.

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Fig. 21. Murakami 2000, Ill. 20.

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