



Patricia Plaud-Dilhuit (ed.)

Territoires du Japonisme (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2014). Paperback, 258 pp., 45 illustrations, € 21.

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Territoires du Japonisme was released two years after the symposium was held at the Université Rennes 2 (Rennes, France) in September 2012. The conference was part of a larger series of events celebrating the artistic relations between Brittany and Japan, including eleven exhibitions on painters influenced by the art of Japan such as Mathurin Méheut, photographers such as Francis Hennequin or engravers like Henri Rivière.¹ On Patricia Plaud-Dilhuit's behalf, a committee was appointed including Geneviève Lacambre (France), Gabriel P. Weisberg (United States) and Miura Atsushi (Japan), in order to select a number of proposals reflecting the numerous facets of Japonisme. The term *territoires* (territories) chosen for the conference reflects both the numerous geographical areas of this movement and the myriad of artistic techniques affected by it, from painting to book-binding, photography, ceramics, silver, textiles and poetry. This publication provides a deeper understanding of the ways Japanese art was introduced into Europe: research on the forming of collections, the role of collectors and art dealers in promoting Japonisme, the critical reception of Japanese art in the west, influence on design and decoration in architecture and decorative arts.

The book includes an introduction by Patricia Plaud-Dilhuit presenting the different themes examined by the participants and nineteen articles written by French, Japanese and American scholars at different stages of their careers. The publication also includes an index, a list of contributors and a table of contents.

The introduction reevaluates the term Japonisme in a broader framework of cross-fertilization, dealing not only with the influence of Japanese art and culture in the western world but also with the reception of western art and culture in Japan. The author recalls the importance of events and publications such as *Le Japonisme* (Geneviève Lacambre, ed. 1988) and *Japonism in Art, An International Symposium* (The Society for the Study of Japonisme, ed. 2001) in the understanding of the movement, its nature and its limitations. While economic and artistic contacts between Europe and Japan were found as early as 1540, Japonisme relates to a specific period: the second half of the 19th century, shaped by the particular cultural and political context of each of the countries

¹ *Bretagne Japon 2012, Un archipel d'expositions* (Quimper: Éditions Palantines, 2012).

in which it took place. As shown by Miura Atsushi in his article, allegories of Asia and more specifically Japan appear as a privileged means of understanding this context and its evolution throughout the late 19th century. From fantasized exoticism to ethnographical accuracy, the author shows how these representations are embedded within economic and cultural mechanisms of the time.

These essays can be divided in two parts: the first nine articles deal with the perception and reception of Japan in France through the portraits of French collectors (Robien, Tressan, Burty and Clémenceau), critics (Geffroy) and associations (Société Franco-Japonaise de Paris) and the analysis of specific objects sent to France from Japan. The last ten articles concern the artistic influence of Japan on French and American painters, poets, photographers, engravers, illustrators, decorators, cabinet-makers and ceramicists and also addresses the impact of Japanese artists' sojourns in France once back in Japan.

The first two articles, by Sabine du Crest and Patrick Beillevaire, provide compelling evidence concerning the early historical interest among French individuals for Japanese objects and culture through the portraits of two men who belonged to different social and professional backgrounds. Christophe Paul de Robien (1698–1756), president of the parliament of Brittany, aristocrat and scholar, collected a significant number of extra-European objects including, among others, *japonica*. The author aims to understand the value and meaning attributed to these objects by analyzing how and where Robien displayed them and by comparing them to other art works and objects in his collection such as *naturalia*. The following case study raises different issues and therefore offers a significant counterpoint. As a Catholic priest and member of the Société des missions étrangères de Paris (Society of foreign missions of Paris), Louis Furet was sent to Japan from where he shipped objects to France. These lacquered boxes, vases, cups and porcelain figurines belonged to everyday life, and they were not made for high-end collectors. According to the author, they nurtured the curiosity of their recipients less because of their aesthetic qualities than due to their exoticism.

When an object travels, its meaning inevitably changes. The gap between its original use and its reception in France as seen in these first two articles is analyzed further by Geneviève Lacambre in her study of two types of objects: stools decorated with Japanese lacquered panels found in the French royal collections and erotic Japanese prints that circulated in the 1860s among French critics and artists including the Goncourt brothers and Gustave Courbet. Informed by archival research, these examples serve as vantage points in linking Japonisme with censorship.