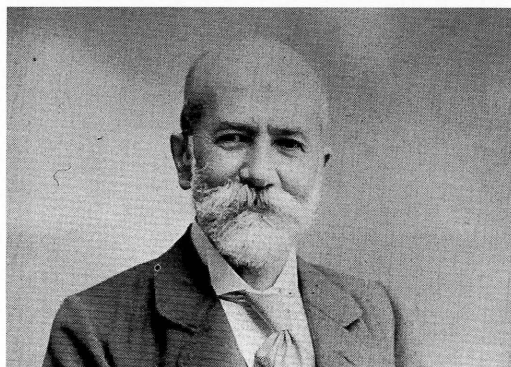


# Japanese Art in the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts

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Ferenc Hopp

The Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts has the largest collection of Asian art in Hungary. More than 7,000 of the museum's 20,000 works are Japanese, forming the next largest group of objects after Chinese art.

The museum celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1994. The foundation of the present-day collection was the donation of 4,000 objects from the private collec-

tion of Ferenc Hopp (whom the museum was named after), which according to his will was to become the property of the country. Hopp wrote in his will of 1910 that he wanted his collection to go to public museums. At that time works would have been divided among three institutions: the National Museum of Fine Arts, the National Museum of Applied Arts, and the Ethnology Department of the Hungarian National Museum. The National Museum of Fine Arts was to have the right of first selection. However, shortly before he died, Hopp decided that he wanted the collection to be kept together as one unit. He revised his will in 1919 to read as follows:

“Since artworks from Asia (China, Japan, India) form the largest portion of my collection, it is fitting that it become the foundation for an independent Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts, which I believe should be open to the public for the purpose of cultural education.”

Actually, even during his lifetime his home could have been called a small museum, with an East Asian style garden complete with stone images and a stone pagoda. After his death all of these were bequeathed to the country.

Ferenc Hopp (1833-1919) was born in the small town of Fulnek in Moravia, in the southern part of what is now the Czech Republic. At age 13 he went to Pest and through the recommendation of relatives, became an apprentice at the Calderoni optical firm. When his apprenticeship period ended, to further his education he spent several years abroad, working in Vienna and New York. It was during this period, in 1858, that he had his unforgettable encounter with the first Japanese delegation when it arrived in New York. After returning to his country, he became the partner of István Calderoni in 1861 and the owner of the firm in 1864. He gained a high reputation, and from 1872 the business was greatly expanded when he embarked upon the manufacture and sale of optical equipment and instruction supplies to schools. Hopp loved to travel and his considerable fortune enabled him to take several trips around the world in his

later life. He visited almost every part of the globe. During his travels he took more than 1,000 photographs, which unfortunately no longer remain. He made five round-the-world trips from 1882 to 1914, visiting Japan three times. He wrote in a letter that nothing brought him as much pleasure as going to Japan. He was impressed by the multitude of high quality decorative arts, praising in particular the fine craftsmanship and ingenuity. At first he went shopping only for souvenirs on his trips, but after becoming an ardent admirer of Eastern Asiatic art he began to buy more seriously. While he was not a specialist, Hopp had excellent taste. As a form of personal enjoyment he devoted himself to purchasing decorative arts, believing that their artistic value could be easily understood. Most of the works he acquired have passed the test of time and their merit is recognized. Hopp purchased works from European art galleries, at exhibitions and from art dealers in Japan, and among others from the Hungarian dealer Mátyás Komor. At that time Kuhn & Komor had shops in Yokohama, Kobe, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore.

After the museum was established, Hopp's collection of 1,800 Japanese artworks was augmented by other public collections, such as the Vay collection of Japanese art from the National Museum of Fine Arts and Eastern Asiatic artworks from the collections of the Ethnology Department at the National Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts. On several occasions after 1919, artworks from these institutions were transferred to the Hopp Museum.

The above-mentioned public collections, as in the case of other European museums, were the products of conscientious efforts starting at the end of the 19th century to expand collections to include art objects from outside of Europe. The Far Eastern art that Hopp found most intriguing was Japanese art, which was extremely influential on the art of his day.

It was also thought that the National Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest should collect Japanese art. In 1907, Péter Vay put forth the idea of actually staying in Japan and selecting works to form a small, general collection of Japanese art. He recognized this as a good opportunity to put together a Japanese collection that went beyond painting and woodblock prints. Vay's proposal was accepted, and he was entrusted with a budget of 20,000 *koronas* to purchase art. Instead of using the funds to buy a few major masterpieces, Vay expanded the range of the collection so it covered several areas of art. Most of the works he acquired are datable to the 19th century and are not by famous artists. A portion of the works were secured through Kuhn & Komor. The total number of works purchased by Vay climbed to over 2,300, including approximately 300 paintings, 170 woodblock books, 1,100 woodblock prints, and 11 Buddhist sculptures, among which are a few early images. In addition, there are more than 700 examples of metalwork, lacquerware, *netsuke*, etc., which increased the value of the collection. From 1908 on, approximately 600 works were usually on display in a "Japanese Gallery" at the National Museum of Fine Arts, and a catalogue was published. Vay's entire collection was transferred to the Hopp Museum in 1919 when the newly established Hopp Museum came under the administration of the

National Museum of Fine Arts (until 1935).

Count Péter Vay (1864-1948) was of noble birth. He was an abbot, later titular bishop, and as a protonotary under the Pope in Rome he was dispatched to East Asia several times to oversee missionary activities. Vay sojourned for awhile in Japan, and according to his travel diary,<sup>(1)</sup> he found the country captivating. He expressed surprise and admiration at the rapid development he witnessed while he was there, and accurately perceived the growing importance of Japan in world politics. He also praised the native aesthetic sensibilities, which permeated all aspects of Japanese society and daily life. Vay understood the spirit underlying the artworks, which he described as “subjective aesthetic sensibility and artistic concept”, and their philosophical background, and the main motive behind his devotion to Japanese art was to foster this appreciation in others. In order to spread the knowledge of Eastern Asiatic art he began to write and published books.<sup>(2)</sup> While lacking in scholarly erudition and containing numerous factual errors and prejudices, his essays overflowed with enthusiasm and Vay succeeded in generating interest in Japanese art.

The National Museum of Applied Arts, established in 1872, had begun to collect Asian art at an earlier stage than Vay. In 1896 it secured a separate building (a representative example of Hungarian art nouveau style architecture) and at this time many Oriental artworks stored at other museums were transferred to the museum. Previously, in 1880, the museum had purchased a collection of 180 combs acquired in Japan around 1869 by the journalist-traveler Attila Szemere (1859-1905). The museum also purchased art at the international expositions in which it participated (Vienna, 1873; Paris, 1878; Paris, 1889; Paris, 1900). For example, it acquired 20 Meiji-period objects at the 1900 Paris Exposition, including some works that had been awarded prizes. Examples are a large painting of a peacock by Araki Kanpo and a small wooden sculpture of a young boy by Yonehara Unkai. Artworks from the Japan Exposition in London in 1911 were exhibited a year later at the National Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest, receiving great acclaim. The museum purchased some of the works from this exposition and numerous others were acquired by private collectors. A portion of the Eastern Asiatic art collection was transferred to the Hopp Museum in 1919.

After World War I, some bequests including a large number of Eastern Asiatic artworks became the property of the Museum of Applied Arts. In 1948, the collection of the ceramics scholar Wartha Vince (1844-1914) was transferred to the museum from the Budapest University of Technology. This collection comprises nearly 4,000 objects documenting the history of ceramics and production techniques. The retired professor of the Veterinary College, Dr. Ottó Fettick (1871-1954), during the period 1947-1953, also made three donations (approximately 1,000 objects) to the Museum of Applied Arts. The Eastern Asiatic ceramics from the above-mentioned two collections became the property of the Hopp Museum. The ceramics created around the turn of the 19th-20th century from the Fettick collection are especially fine.

After the Hopp Museum was established, many works were transferred from what was originally the Ethnology Department of the Hungarian National Museum, now the National Museum of Ethnology, which still retains a collection of Eastern Asiatic artifacts. Among them were works once belonging to Aladar Fleisch, who formerly served as a Consulate-General in Yokohama, as well as from the collection of János Xantus (1825-1894), collected during his expeditions to East Asia in 1869-71. Xantus resided for a long time in the United States. After returning to Hungary, he became director of the Botanical Garden and Zoo, and later the head of the Ethnology Department of the Hungarian National Museum.

Bequeathals and donations from the above-mentioned private collections enriched the collection of the Hopp Museum. Among the other prestigious private collectors was the ship surgeon Dezső Bozoky (1871-1957), who from 1900-1908 served in the area of East Asia and wrote a book about his sea voyages. Aurel Gaszner, an engineer for the Siemens Company who worked in Tokyo from 1907-1912, also collected art.



Aurel Gaszner with Priest Tokunaga Shinzo, of Zōjōji in Shiba Park.

Zoltán Felvinczi Takács (1881-1964) supervised the collection of the Hopp Museum for more than 20 years as director. While an employee of the National Museum of Fine Arts he had been involved in the cataloguing of works purchased by Péter Vay, which is what stimulated his interest in Japanese art. Not only did he know Vay directly, he was also a personal friend and special advisor to Hopp. The realization of the Hopp Museum was largely due to Felvinczi Takács' endeavors.

In 1923, on the 90th anniversary of Hopp's birth, 1,570 works were carefully selected from the greatly expanded collection and placed on permanent display at the Hopp Museum. There had been no large-scale purchases due to economic conditions resulting from the two world wars, but using his specialized knowledge, Felvinczi Takács consolidated and exhibited the collection, endeavoring ungrudgingly to compensate for its deficiencies. He maintained good relationships with Hungarian art dealers living in East Asia, several of whom generously donated works to the Museum. Felvinczi Takács himself made a research trip to the Far East in 1936 and purchased many artworks.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Hopp Museum organizationally became part of the National Museum of Applied Arts in 1948, but it enjoys an independent status with regard to professional affairs. Tibor Horváth (1910-1972) served as director from 1948 until his death in 1972. He lived in Japan for six years, and the museum owns many works from his private collection.

The museum's Japanese collection above all reflects the artistic tastes, interests, and breadth of knowledge of the private collectors whose donations form its basis. The initial unevenness of the collection was recognized and over time it has become more balanced due to thoughtful consolidation and development. Most of the Japanese works in the museum's collection are from the Edo period; in addition to sculpture, painting, and woodblock prints, there is a large quantity of decorative art.

### **Buddhist Art**

Most of the Buddhist sculptures and paintings were purchased by Péter Vay and the range is limited. Among the early sculptures is a dry lacquer Bodhisattva datable to the Nara period, a late Heian-period Shaka, a Kamakura-period standing Amida, and a seated Bodhisattva datable to the Muromachi period. The others are all from the Edo period. Among the later Buddhist works are 40 objects purchased mostly by Hopp himself, primarily small shrines datable to the 18th century. Within this collection of shrines there are some rare examples that are iconographically interesting.

### **Painting**

Most of the collection of approximately 400 paintings is datable to the late Edo period, but there are a few older Buddhist paintings and one or two Muromachi-period ink paintings (for example, Shūtoku's *Sparrow and Bamboo*). With one or two exceptions, the Kanō School works are by later Kanō artists. The great majority of the paintings are by little known *nanga* artists, but the collection also includes works by Tani Bunchō, who is comparatively famous. There is a fine late 17th-18th century album of Genji paintings attributed to the Sumiyoshi School. This album was presented to the painter Gyula Tornai (1861-1928) during his stay in Japan and was later given to the Hopp Museum. Meiji-period painting is represented by the large peacock by Araki Kanpo and Kobayashi Kiyochika's *Hikohohodemi no Mikoto* based on a legendary myth.

### **Woodblock Prints**

The collection of woodblock prints initially was assembled by Péter Vay at the beginning of this century and has expanded to 1,500 works over the years. Since it was not formed with the idea of including representative examples by all the major artists and schools, the collection does not provide a perfectly balanced survey of the history of Japanese prints. Nevertheless, the development of the woodblock print tradition can still be shown, for there are works by early as well as later artists. The collection includes prints by the Torii School masters

Kiyonobu II, Kiyohiro, Kiyonaga, and Kiyomine; there are also works by Katsukawa School artists and Kitagawa Utamaro and his pupils. The great majority are datable to the late Edo period (ca. 19th century), with the number of Meiji prints comparatively fewer. The largest group consists of works by the Utagawa School—one of the major schools at this time—with works by Toyokuni I, Kunisada, Hiroshige, and Kuniyoshi. There are also about 30 prints by lesser known artists affiliated with this school, so that the Utagawa tradition is thoroughly represented. The collection includes examples by Osaka print artists Ryūkōsai Jokei, Hokushū, Hokuei, and Nagahide, as well as actor prints by later Osaka artists Hirosada, Kunikazu, Munehiro, and Yoshitoyo. From the Meiji period there are many works by Toyohara Kunichika, Hashimoto Chikanobu, Mizuno Toshikata, and Ogata Gekkō. In addition there are a number of prints depicting the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars.

### **Lacquerware and *Netsuke***

There are approximately 1,000 lacquer objects, which in terms of quantity and quality form a valuable part of the collection. All of the works are datable to the second half of the Edo period and early Meiji period. Different kinds of lacquer can be seen, especially within the collection of 200 *inrō* displaying various lacquer techniques and a rich variety of decorative motifs. Japanese lacquer occupies a position of importance within the Ferenc Hopp collection, for most were purchased by him. Of special value is the collection of approximately 500 *netsuke*, two-thirds of which were acquired by Hopp. These are without exception superior works. The *netsuke* given to the museum by Gyula Bischitz are few in number but high in quality. Overall the collection presents a good survey of this form of Japanese miniature sculpture, which early on captured the interest of private collectors in Europe and America and consequently more examples remain abroad than in Japan. Within the museum's collection are 18th-century works representing the Kyoto, Osaka, and Edo Schools. There are signed works by Tomotada, Masanao, Okatomo, Okatori, Rantei, Garaku, Shūzan, Mitsuhiro, Masatsugu, Deme Uman, Miwa, Shūmin, Shūgetsu, Tomochika, Hōjitsu, Minkō, Tametaka, Ikkan, and Toyomasa.

### **Ceramics**

The bulk of the collection, numbering more than 1,000 objects, are export ceramics from Hizen (Arita). Most of the pieces date from the 18th century on, but there are several examples from the second half of the 17th century. There are approximately 150 pieces of decorative Satsuma and Kyoto wares made for export. Although small in number, the collection also includes a few tea ceramics.

### **Other**

Hopp had a fondness for rather large ivory sculptures and collected them in earnest. European influences can be seen, for among them are several masterpieces designed to appeal to the tastes of foreigners, depicting the lives and

customs of people of the day. There are numerous bronzes as well as other examples of metalwork and enameled ware, including flower vases, incense stands, ceremonial utensils, and objects from daily life. Most of the works are datable to the Edo and Meiji periods, with a few late 19th-early 20th century bronze sculptures (large and small) showing the influence of Western art.

The Hopp collection also includes swords, sword blades, daggers, and sword accouterments (sword guards, pommels, sword fittings, etc.). The several 100 sword guards and daggers acquired by Vay greatly strengthened the collection so that now this category is comprehensively represented.

There is also a small collection of textiles which introduces diverse materials, weaving techniques, and decorative methods.

At present the Hopp Museum has its exhibition galleries on the second floor and a library on the first. The György Ráth Museum, which became a part of the National Museum of Applied Arts in 1950, has been used for the display of Japanese and Chinese art since 1954. The storage area for the Eastern Asiatic collection is located within the Museum of Applied Arts.

Notes:

- (1) Gróf Péter Vay, *Kelet császárai és császárságai* (Budapest: Franklin Kiadó, 1906).
- (2) *Kelet művészete és műizlése* (Budapest: Franklin Kiadó, 1908).
- (3) Among the many books by Zoltán Felvinczi Takács are: *A Kelet Művészete in Barát-Éber-Takács: "A művészet története"* (Budapest: Dante Kiadó, 1934); *Buddha útján a Távol-Keleten*, 2 Vols. (Budapest: Révai Kiadó, 1938).



Ferenc Hopp in the Asian style garden at his home  
(Garden of the present-day Ferenc Hopp Museum of Eastern Asiatic Arts)