

Cultural Divide: Japanese Art in Australia (1868–2012)

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Australia has had a long and tumultuous relationship with Japan, but unlike other Western countries it has culturally benefited less from this relationship. This is reflected in the history of public art museum collections and exhibitions of Japanese art in Australia. In this history, precedence has been given to European and especially British art and its contemporary Euro-American manifestation over cultural traditions such as that of Japan, a preference that has limited understanding of Japanese culture in Australia. Australian art museums began collecting Japanese art at the beginning of the Meiji period. However, despite important Japanese art works being acquired by Australian art museums, a lack of informed curatorship of these collections has resulted in neglect in collection research, development and exhibition. Fundamental to this problem is the Euro-American bias of art history curriculums in Australian schools and universities that has resulted in few Australian trained Japanese cultural interpreters caretaking these collections.

Keywords: Australian history, Japanese art, Australian public art museums, Japanese art collections, Japanese art exhibitions, Japanese art exhibition catalogues, art history education, western canon, cultural exclusion, multiculturalism

Introduction

As repositories of cultural history public art museums have, since their inception in Europe during the nineteenth century, embodied the Western values associated with “high culture”—that is the Graeco-Roman tradition, and its continuation from the Renaissance onwards.¹ With the legacy of a brutal early history as a penal colony, the Western concept of high culture was seen by Australia’s founding fathers to offer the possibility of a redemptive influence on society. Thus, as a demonstration of “educational perennialism,” art works drawn from this tradition formed the core of public cultural collections in the civilized society that Australia strove to become. The types of art works are reflected for example in Australian university art history reading lists. On 25 May 1861, at the opening of the Art Room in the State Library of Victoria, the forerunner of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), the organizers sought in their display to reproduce what had been published in Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89).² Sydney established an

1 Other ancient civilizations, such as those of Egypt, China, India and parts of the Middle East were typically included in public art museum collections, most commonly for their archaeological significance.

2 Underhill 1996, p. 769.

Academy of Art in 1871, and when it later became the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) its classical façade, built between 1896 and 1909, was embedded with the names of artists who created the greatest works of art within the “Western canon” above friezes decorated with bronze reliefs representing the high cultures of Rome, Greece, Assyria and Egypt.³ The corollary of thus asserting the superiority of certain cultural traditions is that others such as that of Japan were excluded, or at least relegated to a lesser rank. The history of Australian art collections in which precedence is given to European and especially British art and its contemporary Euro-American manifestation over cultural traditions such as that of Japan has served to limit understanding, either by “cultural exclusion” or by applying insufficient connoisseurship and scholarship to Japanese art collections as a “concealment” of cultural knowledge.⁴

Australia and Japan Discover Each Other

It was not until the late 1860s, with the easing of the Japanese restrictions on overseas travel, that the Japanese began to receive any detailed information about Australia. Early reports stressed its European-style affluence, as reflected in an 1866 print triptych by the ukiyo-e artist Tsukioka Yoshitoshi 月岡芳年 (1839–92), depicting prosperous settlers in what is probably the port of Sydney; this is one of the earliest Japanese images of Australia (Figure 1).⁵ In December 1867 a troupe of twelve Japanese acrobats and jugglers performed in Melbourne, possibly the first Japanese to visit Australia, and in 1869 Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 published his *Sekai kuni zukushi* 世界國盡 (A Glimpse of the Countries of the World), in which he described



Figure 1.

3 Stuart 1993, pp. 119–20.

4 The term “cultural exclusion,” also referred to as “exclusionism,” was coined by Crowther 2003. “Concealment” was a term used by McEvilley 1994 to describe the hidden connections between art history and historical developments.

5 In 1854 Yoshida Shōin 吉田松陰 described this affluence in his *Yūshūroku* 幽囚錄 (Prison Notebook) when he stated that Australia was a place where the “...climate is fertile, [and] its people rich and prosperous...” *Shin Oranda* or “New Holland” (*Nova Hollandia*) is the historical name for Australia given to it in 1644 by the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman. The name was used for 180 years and appeared on Japanese maps and in literature.

Australia's history and economy.⁶ In 1871 when a circus performer became the first Japanese to settle in Australia, the country was in the process of gradually transforming itself into a cultured European society made wealthy by gold, agriculture and trade. Although when the Japanese arrived much of the gold had been mined, the opportunities for wealth still existed through a variety of pursuits that included pearling, coal mining and trade in wool. For example, by 1890 the Japanese textile company Kanematsu had established a Sydney branch, and by the mid-1920s Japan was Australia's third largest market for wool exports.⁷

The two largest cities Sydney, the capital of New South Wales, and Melbourne, the capital of Victoria—which had separated from NSW in 1851—vied for the position of Australia's most sophisticated place, having both established universities, libraries, museums and art galleries. A sense of dispossession from the metropole flavored such cultural pursuits with a striving to reproduce in Australia the cultured life of England. Thus in 1854, at the inauguration of the State Library of Victoria (SLV), Sir Redmond Barry (1813–80) founder and President of Trustees, stressed that it was “at least the second best ... in the world to the British Museum.”⁸

In 1875 two Japanese officials, Hashimoto Masato 橋本正人 and Sakata Haruo 坂田春雄, visited Australia to represent their country at the 1875–76 Australian Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne and the 1879–80 Sydney International Exhibition. Later, in Melbourne they were entertained by local officials, including Barry, and given tours of cultural institutions such as the Public Library. This experience must have impressed upon them not only the possibilities for lucrative trade but also the “civilizing” aspects of a society modeled on that of Britain. For both the Japanese and Australians, this period marked an increased awareness of each other. For the Australians, it also signaled a significant change to their cognizance of the world outside the sphere of the British Empire.

This change came with large international exhibitions held in Australia in the late nineteenth century. These displays followed on the success of the first International Exhibition held in London in 1851. They were trade fairs where the focus was on fostering economic ties through demonstrations of industrial prowess. The international exhibitions were distinguished from intercolonial and smaller international exhibitions (which were international in name only) by the level of participation from overseas and by other colonies.⁹ Four exhibitions held between 1879 and 1889 are considered international, and of these Japan was represented in two: the 1879–80 Sydney International Exhibition and the 1880–81 Melbourne



Figure 2.

6 Fukuzawa 1968.

7 Ville 2002, p. 22.

8 *The Age* 1861.

9 A Japanese delegation had participated in the 1875–76 Australian Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne, and in 1877 there was a display of Japanese paintings and crafts in Sydney. In 1888, Japan was represented as part of an Oriental court at an exhibition in Sydney, and in 1888–89 by a Japanese court in Melbourne.

International Exhibition (Figure 2).¹⁰ At these fairs the Japanese delegation received high praise for the quality and craftsmanship of their exhibits, with one review stating that,

There is probably no court which will prove more interesting to the intelligent visitors to the exhibition than that of Japan. Two years ago in Paris the Japanese Court was admittedly the gem of the Exposition, and although, of course, far smaller here, the court of that country promises to be a highly interesting one...¹¹

Displays focused on “manufactured” goods such as pottery, bronze ware, cabinetry, enamels and fans. As reported by Sakata at the Sydney International Exhibition, Japanese products were particularly well received and trade prospects looked promising such that by the beginning of the twentieth century Japanese sources reported that “[a] large number of Japanese vessels are plying regularly between our ports and all the important ports of the Asiatic Continent and Australia, and Europe and America.”¹² As a result, Japanese goods were becoming widely available in Australia to the extent that by 1901 Australia was annually importing goods from Japan worth ¥1,777,599.¹³

During the late nineteenth to early twentieth century when relations between Australia and Japan were good, this trade provided access to Japanese artifacts and the amassing of significant public collections of Japanese art. By the 1930s, the relationship was increasingly soured by racism and war.¹⁴ The change resulted in an extended period in which public collections of Japanese art, with the exception of the NGV, “...remained static and directionless.”¹⁵ As recently as the late 1970s, anti-Japanese sentiment was reflected in public outrage at displays of Japanese art at the AGNSW.¹⁶ By the 1980s, this prejudice had lessened, and since then there has been renewed interest in Japanese art with exhibitions and collection development.¹⁷ I will now analyze this historical development in more detail.

10 The other two international exhibitions were the 1887 Jubilee International Exhibition in Adelaide and the 1888–89 Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne.

11 *The Herald* 1880.

12 Frei 1984, p. 69.

13 Tiernan 1904.

14 This was reflected in the racially discriminatory “White Australia” policy in place from Federation in 1901 until the latter part of the twentieth century. During the Pacific War Australia, as one of the Allied powers, was pitted against the Empire of Japan.

15 Despite holding the most extensive collection of Japanese art in Australia, the NGV was apathetic towards the collection so much so that in 1922 Inagaki Mōshi 稲垣蒙志 (1880–1948?), who was teaching Japanese at the University of Melbourne, referred to the NGV collection of Japanese art as being “not quite correctly described” (Cox 1970, pp. 96–97). Ambassador Debuchi Katsuji’s 出淵勝次 1935 tour of Australia, when he gave a black lacquered lantern (NGV records: 3605-D3) to the NGV, marked the end of a period of good relations between the two countries. It was not until 1957 that the NGV started to build its Japanese collection with the purchase of a Kamakura period sculpture of Jizō Bosatsu (NGV Accession No. 1736-D4). Further, this apathy was reflected in the failure to appoint curators of Asian art at the AGNSW until 1980, at the AGSA until 1989, and at the QAG (in charge of historical Asian art) until 2005. The AGWA has never had a curator of Asian art. The inaugural (honorary) curator of Oriental art at the NGV was appointed in 1938 (Richards 1992).

16 The inaugural curator of Asian art at the AGNSW, Jackie Menzies, noted that as a reaction to her first displays of Japanese art in the 1980s “...there were quite a few letters of outrage... [as the] Pacific War had such an enormous impact on our society” (Andrian 2007).

17 Improved relations between Australia and Japan were initiated by a 1974 cultural agreement between the two countries, and in 1976 by the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation, and the formation of the Australia-Japan Foundation.

Late 19th Century–Early 20th Century Collecting

The development of public collections of Japanese art in Australia occurred against a backdrop of a craze for all things Japanese in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century referred to as “Mikado-mania.” It was stimulated by the Australian public’s direct experience of Japanese culture through international exhibitions, touring groups of Japanese artisans and performers, translations of Japanese folk tales, and Japanese-inspired operettas such as Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Mikado*, which was first performed in Australia in Sydney in 1885. A key element sustaining and broadening this interest was its validation by the popularity of Japanese culture in Europe, particularly *Japonisme* and the Arts and Crafts movement. Australian artists travelled to Europe and some, like the artist Margaret Preston (1875–1963), also to Japan and later developed an antipodean version of *Japonisme*. Meanwhile, the British Arts and Crafts movement influenced Australian art institutions in selecting Japanese decorative arts as models of technical design.

During this period, Japanese artifacts from the international exhibitions and from trading companies were being purchased to decorate fashionable interiors in the large cities as well as in rural homesteads. In addition, a number of prominent Australians inspired by Japanese culture after visiting the country, some as “foreign government advisors” *oyatoi gaikokujin* 御雇い外国人, traded in, collected, wrote about and organized exhibitions and displays of Japanese art.¹⁸ These individuals included the trader and later Honorary Consul for Japan in Melbourne from 1879–1902, Alexander Marks (1838–1919).¹⁹ In 1868, he displayed objects such as ivory carvings, ceramic bowls, lacquerware and “illustrations of Japanese life, on rice paper” on the occasion of the visit to Sydney of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.²⁰ The architect John Smedley (1841–1903) “...organized a section of Japanese paintings and craft goods at the Sydney Metropolitan and Colonial Exhibition in 1877.”²¹ These objects were later auctioned with some going to the AGNSW.²² Professor Arthur Lindsay Sadler (1882–1970) was Professor of Oriental Studies at the University of Sydney from 1922 to 1947, and in this role stimulated an understanding of Japanese art, language, architecture, interior and garden design in 1920s Australia. He was also a collector of samurai armor, swords, ukiyo-e woodblock prints and theatre masks, frequently lecturing at the AGNSW and publishing broadly on aspects of Japanese culture.²³ Many art works from such collections and exhibitions would later find their way into public collections as purchases, gifts or bequests.²⁴

18 One such exhibition was organized at the AGSA in 1861 by the Scottish entrepreneur William Owen (c. 1815–69) who had set up business in Fiji. See Harris 2009, p. 289.

19 Along with his brother Henry Alexander Marks lived in Japan for nine years and traded from a store at 83 King Street, Sydney run by their father Abraham Marks. See Collins 1993a, p. 204.

20 *Sydney Morning Herald* 1868.

21 Clark 1986, p. 2.

22 *Sydney Morning Herald* 1877.

23 Tornatore-Loong 2011, pp. 9 and 14.

24 One recent example is that of the collection of the wealthy wool merchant John Twycross and his wife Charlotte, who purchased works at the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition. The eclectic mix included Japanese works used to decorate their mansion, “Emmarine,” in the Melbourne suburb of Elsternwick. Following Twycross’s death, much of the collection was sold but that which remained with his family was given to Museum Victoria in 2009 as part of the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program (John Twycross Collection donation. Posted on Museum Victoria website, <http://museumvictoria.com.au/about/mv-news/2009/john-twycross-collection/>. Viewed 18 March 2015).

One such bequest was that of the entrepreneur and philanthropist-benefactor to the National Gallery of Victoria, Alfred Felton (1831–1904), whose Anglophilic tastes incorporated the British Arts and Crafts Movement and the Aesthetic Movement’s interest in Japanese craft. Thus he included in his collection bronze vases, cloisonné ware and carved ivories, especially *netsuke*.²⁵ Some have argued that this reflected “a dedicated connoisseurship” of Japanese art.²⁶ In fact, what distinguishes his and other private collections of Japanese art from those in England and the U.S.A. is the absence of the level of scholarship and connoisseurship demonstrated by the English collector William Anderson (1842–1900) and the Americans Edward Sylvester Morse (1856–1919), Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853–1908), and William Sturgess Bigelow (1853–1926) among others. After Felton’s death, a codicil to his will allowed for the NGV to select works from his collection for the state. It is worth noting that, in their selection, the Gallery was careful not to duplicate works by European artists already in their collection, whereas in regard to the Japanese ivory carvings which were not represented in the collection and were described as “undoubtedly the finest collection ever submitted to public competition in Melbourne,” they selected only three from a list of seventy on offer.²⁷

The Art Gallery of South Australia’s Japanese collection benefited from a bequest from the estate of the English-born and educated Sir Samuel James Way (1836–1916), chief justice and lieutenant-governor of South Australia.²⁸ Way’s cosmopolitan tastes were reflected in the interior décor of his home, “Montefiore,” a North Adelaide mansion he bought in 1872, and which he decorated with Japanese art objects. He took every opportunity to develop this collection visiting the Japanese Court of the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition, a large 1880 auction in Adelaide;²⁹ and in 1891, whilst on a world tour, he purchased objects in Japan.³⁰ His collection was described by a prominent visitor to “Montefiore” as, “... a perfect museum of beautiful specimens of Japanese art and curios of all kinds.”³¹ In 1916, the collection he bequeathed to the AGSA consisted of 1,000 prints and decorative art objects, including *netsuke* and *tsuba*, of which the Gallery chose around 250. Significant amongst them was a Kamakura period *Jūichimen Kannon* 十一面觀音 (Figure 3).

25 Vaughan 1976, p. 21.

26 Inglis and Poynter 2004, p. 3. Inglis and Poynter offer no corroboration for this assessment other than the “sheer number” of seventy *netsuke*. The quality and size of this collection cannot be determined as it was not catalogued, but it pales into insignificance in comparison with other *netsuke* collections such as that of the European collector, Bruno W. Werdelmann (1920–2010), who amassed one of the world’s finest collection of *netsuke* with 1,100 pieces collected over a thirty-five year period, a collection given to the Museum Kunstpalast, Stuttgart in 2004.

27 Gemmell Tuckett & Co. 1904 and Inglis and Poynter 2004, p. 11.

28 Way held influential positions in many of South Australia’s educational, cultural and philanthropic institutions, including Chancellor of the University of Adelaide and president (1893–1908) of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of South Australia (Bray 1990).

29 The auction comprised “very superior Japanese curiosities” including “very old bronzes ... elegant Satsuma and Kyoto vases, inlaid lacquerware tables ... and embroidered silk Japanese pictures.” The auction, conducted by Maurice Salom & Co., was held at 63 Hindley Street, Adelaide on 20 November 1880 (Harris 2009, pp. 289 and 292).

30 He spent six weeks in Japan, and whilst there purchased many objects, such as cloisonné from the studio of the artisan Namikawa Yasuyuki in Kyoto, cloisonné, lacquerware and damascene ware from Echigoya S. Ikeda in Kobe, pottery from the Kinkōzan workshop, Awata, Kyoto and embroideries and silk dresses from the Nishimura Sozayemon silk store in Kyoto.

31 This description was penned by Lady Braseey, the wife of Lord Braseey who would later become Governor of Victoria (Harris 2009, p. 292).

Art works were also being directly acquired by Australian public art galleries from the international exhibitions, at a time when these institutions were establishing their collections. For the AGNSW, the gift of contemporary ceramics, bronzes, cloisonné enamels and lacquer ware by the Japanese government from the 1879–80 Sydney International Exhibition has been acknowledged as the stimulus for the development of their Asian art collection, as it was for the Japanese collection at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney (Figure 4).³² In 1868 the NGV accessioned the first Japanese work in an Australian collection, an early nineteenth century lacquer bottle.³³ Subsequently that institution and the National Museum of Victoria acquired bronzes, ceramics, lacquer ware, armory, musical instruments, and ivory *okimono* from the various intercolonial and international exhibitions. Although these objects were admired for their artistic expression, they were not considered “fine art,” and in many cases they



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.

languished in collection storage or were sold, as was the case with 750 Chinese and Japanese art objects from the NGV auctioned in 1943.³⁴ The rationale for doing so was that they were merely “ethnological material and objects of curiosity.”³⁵ One of these nineteenth century acquisitions accessioned in 1887 is a late Edo period hanging scroll *yōkai-e* 妖怪絵 (or monster picture) by the Kyoto Tsurusawa school artist Sasaki Sengen 佐々木泉玄 (1805–79)(Figure 5).³⁶

32 For objects from the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition now in the Powerhouse Museum collection, see Powerhouse Museum website, http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/search_tags.php?tag=1879+sydney+international+exhibition%2C+Japan. For objects from the 1880–81 Melbourne International Exhibition now in the Museum Victoria collection see Museum Victoria website, <http://search.museum.vic.gov.au/collections/tags/exhibitions-melbourne-international-1880-1881?t=Object>.

33 Woolcott 1998, p. 3.

34 In total 750 Chinese and Japanese art objects described by the Gallery as “of value and significance” were sold, the rationale for doing so being that “...the Gallery collection already contains duplicates comparable to and finer than these...” (McClelland 1943). Quoted in Collins 1993a, p. 225.

35 Pang 1998.

36 Signed “*Hōgen Sengen rokujūissai hitsu*” (From the brush of sixty-one years old *Sengen* of *hōgen* rank) with the artist’s seal “*Minamoto no Morikimi in.*” I thank Professor Kobayashi Tadashi for confirming the identity of this artist.

It is probably the first Japanese painting to enter an Australian public collection but was only recently correctly labeled and conserved.³⁷

In the period 1902–03, the forerunner of the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery under the leadership of their inaugural Director, the English-born Bernard Henry Woodward (1846–1916), was responsible for one of the earliest major public acquisitions of Japanese art in Australia. A classicist, Woodward sought art works from Greece, Rome, and Egypt as examples “...of perfect order and perfect elegance.”³⁸ His interests extended to “representative examples of the arts and crafts of the world...” including “a whole series of Japanese [pottery] from the Imperial Museum at Tokio.”³⁹ In total, 146 works, including a substantial number of ukiyo-e prints were acquired from the Imperial Commercial Museum in Tokyo;⁴⁰ it operated under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture and Commerce, and contained principally domestic produce intended for foreign export.⁴¹ In other words, these were manufactured goods intended to encourage trade relations. Woodward himself indicated as much when he described the Japanese works as both “modern” and “manufactures.”⁴² In their subsequent publications, the AGWA has intimated that this acquisition was part of a deliberate and informed collection policy in relation to Japanese art, but the only significant acquisition of historical Japanese art work since that time has been a gift of twenty-six ukiyo-e woodblock prints in 1984 by the art collectors Sue and Dr. Ian Bernadt. There have been no significant exhibitions or publications related to this collection.⁴³ The early history of the AGWA like that of the other major public art galleries reflects an attitude, expressed in 2003 by Edmund Capon, then the Director of the AGNSW, which held that Japanese art was,

[s]een as objects of curiosity and emblems of an exotic and unknown culture[. They] were admired for their mysterious unfamiliarity and their technical dexterity. However, they were also regarded more as “manufactures” than works of art with the result that these original acquisitions failed to stir the imaginations of the people of Sydney and made little impact upon the subsequent development of the gallery’s Asian collections.⁴⁴

37 When the author viewed the scroll in the Conservation Laboratory of the National Gallery of Victoria on 16 May 2011, it was in need of conservation. My research indicates that it had not been first displayed until 2008–09 in a NGV exhibition *The cricket and the dragon: Animals in Asian art*. In September 2015, it was still incompletely catalogued as, Hougansengen, *Hannya the witch*, pigments on silk, 180.4 × 144.8 cm, purchased 1887, Accession 1901-D14. Following this author’s inquiries, the painting was conserved and its records were updated to read “*Hannya the demon*, 1865.”

38 Woodward 1900.

39 *The West Australian* 1904, p. 3.

40 The ukiyo-e were all late Edo works by Utagawa school artists produced a little over a decade prior to their arrival in Western Australia, where they were viewed as contemporary manufactured products.

41 Hoshi 1904, p. 53.

42 “The director of the Museum and Art Gallery states that he has just received two cases of Japanese manufactures from the Imperial Museum at Tokio. These are all modern works, but are genuine” (*The West Australian* 1903).

43 In 1989 an eight-page information booklet titled “Ukiyo-e: Traditional Japanese Woodblock Prints” was produced profiling the Japanese woodblock print collection. Although this was the first serious attempt to research the collection, it highlighted the lack of specialized knowledge available to complete the full cataloguing (Nedēla 1989).

44 Capon 2003.

The one exception to this neglect in Japanese art collection development was the NGV. Here a major bequest of funds from the estate of Alfred Felton in 1904 gave the NGV one of the largest acquisition budgets of any art museum in the world and a more encompassing approach to collecting by NGV Director Bernard Hall (1859–1935). It resulted in some of the most important early acquisitions of Japanese art by an Australian art gallery. In 1906, two years after Felton’s death, the NGV Japanese art collection benefited from his legacy with a purchase of a seventeenth century six-fold screen, formerly from the Siebold collection in Berlin, and possibly one of a pair depicting flowering plants of the four seasons attributed to the Sôtatsu school, because of the attached large round red ink Inen 伊年 seal (Figure 6).⁴⁵ In selecting this work, the Felton Committee took the advice of Jean-Jacques Marquet de Vasselot (1871–1946), a curator of decorative arts at the Louvre Museum, establishing a pattern of seeking the advice of European or other overseas “specialists” in the acquisition of Japanese art.⁴⁶ This was at a time when American and European collectors and institutions were amassing coherent collections, in many cases directly from Japanese sources and based upon their informed knowledge of the subject.⁴⁷ The next major acquisition of Japanese art by the NGV maintained this “cultural cringe” with the purchase in 1909, on the advice of an Englishman, of part of an American’s collection of ukiyo-e.⁴⁸



Figure 6.

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- 45 NGV collection records show this work was accessioned in 1907. Sôtatsu kept the Inen seal for works produced by his shop rather than works from his own hand.
- 46 On the advice of the NGV Trustees, de Vasselot was given 1,000 pounds to acquire works of art. The Inen seal screen is the only Japanese work he acquired for the NGV. Marquet de Vasselot’s proven connoisseurship has been called into question by a number of European art specialists. Professor Jaynie Anderson of Melbourne University states that, “I have recently been in correspondence with Marc Bascou at the Musée du Louvre about his predecessor. Marquet de Vasselot may have exaggerated his activities for acquisitions at the Louvre for he talks more about the art market than about actual pieces” (Anderson 2008).
- 47 Australian and American institutions were established and began developing their collections around the same time. The Eurocentric bias of Australian collectors and institutions reveals that Japanese and other Asian art was not a priority for Australia. This is despite the fact that the NGV was at the time “one of the best endowed galleries in the world” (Bedwell 2007, p. 351). Thus, the NGV had the capability to develop an internationally significant Japanese art collection. This lost opportunity is revealed by 2014 museum annual visitation numbers, which rank the NGV (24th) above both the AIC (31st) and the QAG (47th) and the AGNSW (53rd) above the MFA (55th). The MFA has one of the finest and most extensive collections of Japanese art in the world. (“Top 100 Art Museum Attendance,” *The Art Newspaper* [Hong Kong], 2014. Viewed 26 November 2014.)
- 48 A term first coined by Arthur Angel Phillips, it refers to the assumption that Australian knowledge is inferior to that of the British and European counterparts (Phillips 1950).

This ukiyo-e collection was purchased in 1909 from American John Stewart Happer (1863–1937) who had amassed an extensive collection of ukiyo-e, with many prints by Hiroshige, which led to him being referred to as “Hiroshige Happer.”⁴⁹ He had intended to keep his collection in tact but was forced to sell it due to the illness of his wife;⁵⁰ he commissioned Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge in London to auction it in April 1909.⁵¹ According to the British novelist and ukiyo-e collector Arthur Morrison, who wrote the Preface to the auction catalogue, “Without a shadow of doubt no such important body of Japanese color prints as regards quality has ever been offered for public sale in this country.”⁵²

The NGV Felton Bequest adviser, Frank Gibson (1865–1931), was engaged to purchase prints from this collection. Lacking specialized knowledge in the field, Gibson sought the advice of the English ukiyo-e specialist, Edward F. Strange of the Victoria and Albert Museum in making his selection.⁵³ The NGV purchased fifty six lots from this sale.⁵⁴ Gibson seemed conscious of amassing a representative collection within the authorized budget of £500.⁵⁵ In so doing, he missed major works that would have helped make this an exceptional ukiyo-e collection by world standards.⁵⁶ For example, of the Hokusai prints on offer his purchases were between £5 and £7, whilst many of the impressions sold for upwards of £10. One exception was his purchase of one of two impressions of Katsushika Hokusai’s 葛飾北斎 (1760–1849) *Kanagawa oki namiura* 神奈川沖浪裏 (The Great Wave off Kanagawa) from his c. 1830–35 series *Fugaku sanjūrokkei* 富嶽三十六景 (Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji; Figure 7).⁵⁷ The first of these, catalogue no. 122, was described as an “Exceptionally fine sharp copy”;⁵⁸ the second, catalogue no. 149, as “an exceptionally brilliant impression”;⁵⁹ and “...one of the finest examples in existence...”⁶⁰ Catalogue no. 122 sold for £9/10 shillings and catalogue no. 149 sold for £23/10 shillings to a Mr. Charles Davis.⁶¹ The NGV purchased the former work, and it has the hallmarks of a sharp early printing.⁶² Another feature of later imprints is the background clouds, which are either

49 Happer’s gravestone was inscribed, “Here lies one who loved Hiroshige, John Stewart Happer, April 9th 1863–December 19th 1936.” See Bush 1969.

50 Meech-Pekarik 1982, p. 47.

51 Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge 1909. The total realized for the Happer sale was £6,013 (*The Daily Telegraph* 1909).

52 Morrison in Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge 1909.

53 Cox 1970, p. 70. Edward Fairbrother Strange (1862–1929) wrote a number of specialist books on the Japanese print including Edward Fairbrother Strange. *Japanese Colour Prints*. Victoria and Albert Museum, 1923.

54 Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge 1909. The NGV Library has a typed notation of the original copy with “Prints marked G purchased by Gibson, Felton Bequest adviser, on behalf of the National Gallery of Victoria.”

55 *The Age* 1909.

56 The quality of the purchases could have been compromised by Strange’s dual role at the Happer sale both as adviser to Gibson and as purchaser for the V&A collection (Chadwick 2011, p. 19).

57 NGV records date this series as 1826–33. Available online at NGV Collection, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/22076/>. Viewed 8 September 2015.

58 Catalogue no. 122 text, in Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge 1909.

59 Catalogue no. 149 text, in Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge 1909.

60 *The Times* 1909.

61 It was reported that Davis “was prepared to pay double that amount” for this work (*The Morning Post* 1909).

62 For example, there is no wear to the block often seen in a wide break in the line of the wave behind the boat on the far right, and also there are no breaks around the title cartouche, features indicating an impression taken from a block that has suffered the wear of numerous printings. The British Museum has such an example of this work, acquired in 1937, that has both these flaws as well as a darker grey sky seen in later impressions. The British Museum Collection online website http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=8808&partId=1. Viewed 23 April 2011.



Figure 7.

faded or have disappeared altogether. An example of this work in New York's Metropolitan Museum acquired in 1936 is considered the world's best, and whether or not this is the same work as catalogue no. 149 in the 1909 Happer Collection sale, the accompanying text for the same perfectly describes this Metropolitan Museum quality print.⁶³ What detracts from the NGV version is the condition of the paper which has deterioration around the edges, discoloration and a prominent center fold. The failure of the NGV to acquire the "exceptionally brilliant impression" of this work, as well as Hokusai's other acknowledged masterpiece from the series, *Gaifū kaisei* 凱風快晴 which sold for £15/10 shillings, must be seen as a lost opportunity.⁶⁴ Similarly catalogue no. 480, Utagawa Hiroshige's 歌川広重 (1797–1858) *ōban* triptych *Kisoji no yamakawa* 木曾路の山川 (Mountains and Rivers on the Kiso Road) from an 1857 untitled set of triptychs on the theme of "snow," as part of the traditional subject of *setsugekka* 雪月花 ('snow, moon, and flowers'), was purchased for £22. The opportunity to complete this three-set *ōban* triptych series by purchasing the "moon and flowers" triptychs, which sold for £11 and £13 respectively, was bypassed.⁶⁵

The failure to obtain such important works was in part dictated by a drive to acquire what both Gibson and later the Assistant Director of the NGV Dr. Ursula Hoff (1909–2005) described as a "representative collection."⁶⁶ Budgetary restraints also contributed to this

63 In correspondence with the author, Hokusai scholar Prof. Dr. M.F.M. (Matti) Forrer, Extraordinary professor at Leiden University Institute for Area Studies, stated that in his opinion the three best copies (in descending order) of Hokusai's *Kanagawa oki namiura* are in the Metropolitan Museum, New York (no. 2569), the Guimet Museum, Paris (no. 3285) and another impression in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (no. 1847).

64 The text accompanying this work describes it as being in "beautiful condition." See catalogue no. 110 text, in Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge 1909.

65 Catalogue no. 481, "View of Naruto Strait in Awa" (*Awa no Naruto no fūkei* 阿波鳴門之風景) sold for £11 and catalogue no. 482, "Evening View of Eight Famous Sites at Kanazawa" (*Buyō Kanazawa hasshō yakei* 武陽金澤八勝夜景) sold for £13 (Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge 1909).

66 For a biography of Ursula Hoff, see Anderson 2013. In a 4 February 1910 letter from Gibson to the Chairman of the Felton Bequest Committee he stated that, "...a very representative collection of Japanese prints were secured by the Felton Bequest Committee..." (Cox 1970, p. 70).

for Gibson had been criticized by Hall for making overly expensive purchases;⁶⁷ and this sale was remarkable for the “high prices” it realized.⁶⁸ However, the ukiyo-e purchases only represented seventeen percent of the overall NGV acquisitions spending in that year, so more prints could have been purchased if there had been the incentive to do so.⁶⁹ The failure was especially regrettable considering that during the period in which Gibson was the Felton advisor, Felton Bequest acquisition funds “...were, to a considerable degree wasted” with the exception being, as noted later by Ursula Hoff, his acquisitions from the Happer sale.⁷⁰ Thus, although this acquisition broke new ground for Australian collections, in retrospect it must be seen as a lost opportunity.⁷¹

Positive newspaper reports at the time confirm that there was recognition of the importance of these ukiyo-e acquisitions outside the NGV.⁷² This may have led Gibson to highlight his “expertise” in his later correspondence to the Felton Committee. For in the following year, when acquisitions funds were allocated, he inferred that he was drawing upon his own expertise: “...There are still two masters who are inadequately represented in the collection, namely, Utamaro and Hiroshige and *Mr. Strange agrees with me* [my italics] that an attempt ought to be made to make the collection quite complete by purchasing good example of both these great Masters of Japan...”⁷³ In the same year, the NGV purchased works by both these artists at a Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge London auction of the collection of the Canadian Col. H. Appleton held in June 1910.⁷⁴ However, in 1913 when Gibson approached the Felton Committee to purchase further ukiyo-e prints his request was denied, the collection being then considered “quite complete.”⁷⁵ A 1947 exhibition of 114 of these prints was popularly received, but the only other significant acquisitions were a Katsushika Hokusai ink sketch (Figure 8) and a *yakusha-e* 役者絵 by Tōshūsai Sharaku 東洲斎写楽 (active 1794–95), both purchased in 1966.⁷⁶

Although the Inen seal screen and the Happer ukiyo-e collection were the highlights of this early period of collecting during the 1920–30s, Japanese art of the type displayed at the international exhibitions was being made available to the NGV through bequests, gifts or sale. During the same period, the Chinese collection grew, establishing it as the collection priority. As a consequence, the Asian art collection was overseen by a succession of curators, including the current curator Mae Anna Quan Pang (1941–), whose responsibilities were for the whole collection but whose specializations were in Chinese art.⁷⁷ The approach taken to the Japanese collection was either to omit it from acquisitions policy reports and catalogue

67 Poynter 2003, p. 292.

68 *The Morning Post* 1909.

69 The overall spending on NGV acquisitions in 1909 was £7076, 17s with £510 being spent on acquiring works from the Happer sale (Trustees of the Public Library, Museums & National Gallery of Victoria 1909).

70 Cox 1970, p. 70.

71 In comparison, it was not until the 1940s that the Art Gallery of South Australia began collecting ukiyo-e prints; the Art Gallery of New South Wales followed suit some three decades later (Richards 1999, p. 4 and Menzies 2003a, p. 9).

72 “They will be a decided acquisition to the National Gallery, as they represent the highest form of art in Japan” (*The Age* 1909).

73 Letter from Gibson to the Chairman of the Felton Bequest Committee, 4 February 1910. (NGV Felton Correspondence held in The Shaw Research Library, NGV.)

74 Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge 1910.

75 Minutes of the meeting of the Felton Purchase Committee, 20 November 1913. State Library of Victoria MSF 12855, vol. 63.

76 Hoff 1947 and Cox 1970, p. 303.

77 These were the inaugural (honorary) curator of Oriental art at the NGV, Herbert Wade Kent (1877–1952), and Leonard Bell Cox (1894–1976).



Figure 8.

raisonnes, or to display it in the context of Chinese art.⁷⁸ Significant acquisitions of Japanese art were made at this time, such as a Kamakura period sculpture of Jizō Bosatsu and two Momoyama period six-fold *kachō-ga* 花鳥画 screens, identified as a pair and attributed to Hageitsu Tōsatsu 波月等薩 (1516–c. 1585). But they were made on the advice of dealers rather than through the informed input of curators.⁷⁹

Historical Japanese Art Collecting and Exhibitions since the 1980s

Up to the 1980s, the NGV had the most significant collection of Japanese art in Australia. In 1977, part of this collection was profiled in the touring exhibition, *The Arts of Asia*, but the Gallery attitude is reflected in the fact that the exhibition was organized by an administration officer rather than the Asian art curator.⁸⁰ In 1982, the touring exhibition *Japan: Masterpieces from the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo* opened at the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG) and toured all other state galleries.⁸¹ It was described as “the first major exhibition of Japanese art held in Australia,” and marked an increased awareness of Japanese

78 Kent did not mention Japanese art in an acquisitions policy report he made in 1944 and in the same report he recommended the acquisition of a Chinese polychrome woodcarving to flank a Japanese sculpture of a bodhisattva already in the collection (Collins 1993a, pp. 378–84, and Kent 1944).

79 The tendency, still today, is for curators to rely on dealers of Japanese art for both acquisitions and the accompanying research.

80 Guy 1977. In 1982 at the Monash University Visual Arts Gallery (now known as the Monash University Museum of Art) there was an exhibition, *Glimpses of Ukiyo-e: Japanese Art of the Late Tokugawa Period* that also included borrowed works from the NGV.

81 Opening at the Queensland Art Gallery 22 June to 1 August 1982, the exhibition travelled to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Art Gallery of South Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria and the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

art by Australian art galleries.⁸² Prompted by this raised profile, James Mollison, Director of the NGV in 1989, called for an assessment of the collection. But the assessment was undertaken in 1990 by the current curator, without the presence of a Japanese art specialist. Considering the quality of the ukiyo-e collection and the fact that it had been neither fully researched nor catalogued, it is surprising that in 1993 Mollison reported that they “... found the existing [ukiyo-e] collection inadequate as the basis for an exhibition.”⁸³ In 1995, he also reported that works in other mediums needed “...a coherent group with those works in the collection” to make it “possible to mount” a Japanese exhibition. To the benefit of the Japanese collection, this five-year period was marked by in excess of ninety new acquisitions that included calligraphy, paintings and woodblock prints. Many of these prints were affordable and more colorful Utagawa school prints, which were considered to have the popular appeal necessary “... to enable the mounting of a first class show.”⁸⁴ They were exhibited in two almost identical ukiyo-e exhibitions in 1993 and 2005. The NGV also mounted a number of exhibitions from 1995 until 2007 that included Japanese art from the collection, in mediums other than the print, but the curator’s background in Chinese art led her, in these exhibitions, to stress almost exclusively the “...historical and stylistic connections [that] were drawn between the arts of China and Japan.”⁸⁵ With the exhibition text repeated, often verbatim, these exhibitions and publications reveal inadequacies in the research and cataloguing of the collection, a result of the unwillingness on the part of the NGV to commit to specialized staff.⁸⁶

Other Australian public art museums had followed a pattern exemplified by the AGSA of promising beginnings in the early 1900s followed by “many years [in which] the Asian collection remained static and directionless.”⁸⁷ For with “...no specialized curatorial position for Asian art ... the Gallery was focused on representing Western traditions of easel painting and sculpture.”⁸⁸ It was not until 1989 that a curator exclusively responsible for the Asian art collection was appointed with fortuitous purchases such as *Scenes of the Ezo Fishing Grounds* by Kodama Teiryō 小玉貞良 (active c. 1751–64) (Figure 9) and donations by local collectors that helped to develop the AGSA Japanese art collection. Donations of acquisition funds by Japanese companies in the 1980s resulted in two Japanese screens being acquired, a c. 1760 pair of six-fold screens, *The plain of Musashi, Mount Fuji and the Moon*,

82 *The Australian Women's Weekly* 1982.

83 National Gallery of Victoria 1993.

84 National Gallery of Victoria 1993.

85 Pang 1996, p. 32.

86 Pang was tasked with overseeing all areas of Asian art, but since her specialization was only Chinese art she relied on other staff such as the Indian-born Curator of European Art Emma Devapriam, who dealt with art from the Indian sub-continent, and the Circulations Officer John Guy, who organized displays of Japanese art. Even as recently as 1990 when the NGV was planning a ukiyo-e exhibition, there was uncertainty about who was in charge of the Japanese art collection. In a correspondence between Pang and the Senior Curator, Prints & Drawings, Dr. Irena Zdanowicz Pang asked “Would your department be responsible for the exhibition?” (NGV Memorandum dated 17 December 1990). However, Mollison rightly saw the responsibility for the ukiyo-e collection as being with the Asian Art Department. Despite inadequate expertise to hand, there was intransigence against seeking specialist assistance for this 1993 exhibition even though there was expertise in Japanese art available on staff, in the Australian academic community as well as from a visiting overseas ukiyo-e specialist. Instead, the general knowledge of the curator assisted by a Registration Officer with no background in Japanese art was deemed as adequate.

87 Richards 1992.

88 “About the Asian art collection.” Posted on Art Gallery of South Australia website, http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agsa/home/Collection/about_asian_collection.html. Viewed 10 May 2012.



Figure 9.



Figure 10.

a gift from Mitsubishi Motors Limited in 1981 and the gift in 1990 by Dai-Ichi Mutual Life Insurance of an early seventeenth century pair of six-fold screens, known as *Scenes from the Tale of Genji*. Another pair of six-fold screens, *Autumn Landscape with Wild Geese*, c. 1650 was acquired in 1986 with the support of local benefactors, Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett. Their backing was crucial in developing the Japanese screen painting collection now represented by eleven screens from the Edo period onwards including an Unkoku school pair of screens, *Millet and Birds* dated to the first half of the seventeenth century. Further acquisitions followed, including a donation from 2003–05 of over one hundred Japanese woodblock prints from the collection of Dr. Brian and Barbara Crisp, and in 1998 the acquisition of the first example of Shinto art in Australia: camphor wood sculptures of a male and female deity (*shinzō* 神像), dated to the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries (Figure 10).

In the 1980s, two other public art galleries began to take an active role in the development and presentation of Asian art: the QAG which, although existing since 1895, had no permanent location until 1982; and the Australian National Gallery (ANG), later renamed the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), which opened in the same year. Asian art took on a dramatically enhanced profile at the QAG in the late 1980s with the appointment in 1987 of a new Board of Trustees with Richard Austin (1926–) as its Chairman, and a new Gallery Director in Doug Hall (1954–). Austin was a vigorous advocate for giving Asian art a greater presence because of the Gallery’s geographical proximity to the region. He had a particular enthusiasm for historical Japanese art, despite having been a prisoner of war in Changi prison camp and having worked on the infamous Burma railroad.⁸⁹ During his tenure as Board Chairman, he was responsible for establishing the Masterpiece collection of Japanese pottery from the Six Old Kilns, but Austin was still of the opinion that the cost and availability of historical Asian art meant it was not a viable area for collection development; he felt it was already well represented in other state galleries.⁹⁰ His opinion was not well informed, considering the development that smaller public art galleries with modest budgets such as the Hamilton Art Gallery in Victoria and the Rockhampton Art Gallery in Queensland have been able to achieve with their Japanese art collections.⁹¹ This argument opened the doors for Hall and the Deputy Director and Manager of International Programs Caroline Turner (1947–) to ride the international upsurge of interest in contemporary Asian art by making that the focus by inaugurating the Asia-Pacific Triennial (APT) of contemporary art series of exhibitions in 1993.⁹² Hall’s view was that, “Australia’s engagement with Asia has, more often than not, been conceived as art history, both through exhibitions and the development of collections ...” and that a contemporary focus, “... broke the pattern of art museums’ preoccupation with the past...”⁹³ This attitude contrasts with that of the former Director of the AGNSW, Edmund Capon, who stated:

[t]he historical arts of Asia are an indisputable encyclopedia of human achievement and imagination; indeed it is those arts that have shaped both our image and our perception of the Asian region and its multitude of identities... [T]he living arts...are the inheritors of that great wealth of history and the expressions of a similarly vast range of contemporary values and imaginations across Asia.⁹⁴

89 Turner 2000.

90 Austin 1997, p. 14.

91 Rockhampton Art Gallery is the only Queensland regional art gallery with any significant collection of Japanese art. Other public institutions with Japanese art works are: Queensland University of Technology (woodblock prints and ceramics by two Japanese potters who settled in Australia, Shiga Shigeo (1928–2011) and Mitsuo Shōji (1946–), Sunshine Coast University (a Hiroshige print), University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba (in their archives they have drawings and plans by Japanese designers for the University of Southern Queensland Japanese gardens), Ironside State School, St. Lucia (Japanese bridal kimono), Ipswich Art Gallery (a collection of sixty-six works by children from Nerima city), Logan Art Gallery (ceramic vase by Hansai Kikko and various sister city gifts including a calligraphy by Chosen Shinoda, *Cloud Poem*, 1996), Perc Tucker Regional Gallery (etchings by Akio Makigawa [1948–99] who was based in Melbourne), Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery (a pot by Shiga Shigeo). See MacAulay 2009.

92 Chandler 2007, p. 34.

93 Hall 1993.

94 Capon 2003.

Arguing against a “preoccupation with the past,” the QAG distinguishes itself from “...most other institutions that collect Asian art, [in that it] approaches the arts of Asia primarily through contemporary practice.”⁹⁵ Further, their appointment of curators to oversee the Asian art collection who do not have expertise in Asian cultural traditions but whose background is in contemporary art indicates a belief that “[t]he ‘globalisation’ of culture over the last century and even before has imposed a Western aesthetic on most Asian cultures.”⁹⁶ This approach has restricted the development of their traditional Asian art collection, including the Japanese collection. Importantly, the imbalance has limited their ability to provide a fuller cultural context for their contemporary Asian art.

This antipathy toward the historical Asian art collection has precedents at the QAG, for their main “collection strengths” and historical Japanese art exhibitions up until the 1990s were of ukiyo-e prints, many of which knowingly included reproductions (*fukuseiga* 複製画). Nineteenth century Australian public galleries had collected and displayed reproductions, but by the early twentieth century such a practice was seen as “baffling to the serious student.”⁹⁷ This anachronistic treatment at the QAG was indicative of a scarcity of knowledge about Japanese art, which led one 1997 exhibition to be premised on the need to redress the public perception of “the similarity of Japanese and Chinese art.”⁹⁸ However, almost a decade later there was a reappraisal of earlier attitudes towards historical Asian art. Following the establishment in 2006 of a separate building known as the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) within the same QAG precinct, there was a new commitment “... to build on existing strengths in both the historical and contemporary collections, the idea being to create a dialogue between the two.”⁹⁹ This led to a number of significant Japanese art acquisitions in the period 2007–09, which included Jōmon and Yayoi period jars, three Edo period painted screens, two of which are illustrations of the *Tale of Genji*.¹⁰⁰ Up to that point, the only screen in the collection was a pair of six-panel screens by Unkoku Tōeki 雲谷

95 Raffle 2003, p. 22.

96 Gutman 1996. Up until he left the QAG in 2014, Russell Storer oversaw the QAG Asian Art historical collection as Curator of Contemporary Asian Art; his background is in contemporary art.

97 In the nineteenth century Australian public galleries such as the National Gallery of Victoria had collected and displayed reproductions, but by the early twentieth century the Felton Adviser to the NGV, Sir Sydney Cockerell had warned that, “...it is a grave error to combine authentic works of art with so many modern so-called reproductions. This mixture of true and false is baffling to the serious student. It would be better to ... keep the bulk of the reproductions severely apart, ... prominently labeled as Reproductions, whence they would by degrees be ousted as fresh originals are acquired” (Cox 1970, p. 412).

98 Just 1996, n. p.

99 Email correspondence between Sarah Tiffin, inaugural Curator of Historical Asian Art at the QAG 2005–2009 and the author (Thursday 19 April 2012).

100 Two middle-late Jōmon period (2500–1500 B.C.) deep pots, both purchased 2008, Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant, acc. nos. 2008.317 and 2008.318. Two Yayoi period Jars (400 B.C.–300 B.C. and 100–300 A.D.), both purchased 2008, The Queensland Government’s Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund, acc. nos. 2009.017 and 2009.018. A pair of late seventeenth century six-fold screens, *Scenes from the Genji Monogatari* attributed to the Hasegawa School, purchased 2007 with funds from the Henry and Amanda Bartlett Trust through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation, acc. 2007.225a-b; a mid-eighteenth century pair of six-fold screens, *Scenes from the Genji Monogatari (Tale of Genji)* by Tosa Mitsuatsu (active 1734–64), purchased 2008 with funds from the Estate of Vincent Stack through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation, acc. 2008.316a-b; a seventeenth century pair of six-fold screens, *Birds and Flowers of the Four Seasons* by Kano Yasunobu (1613–85), purchased 2008 with funds from the Henry and Amanda Bartlett Trust through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation, acc. 2008.315a-b and an eighteenth century six-fold screen, *Cherry Blossom at Yasaka-Jinja, Kyoto* by Kawamata Tsunemasa (active 1716–48), purchased 2009, The Queensland Government’s Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund, acc. 2009.077.

等益 (1591–1644). The first ukiyo-e *nikuhitsuga* 肉筆画 was purchased at this time: a *bijin-ga* 美人画 by Matsuno Chikanobu 松野親信 (1716–35), which may in the future prompt a re-assessment of the ukiyo-e print collection if further *nikuhitsuga* are acquired or work is done on the print collection.¹⁰¹ Other acquisitions during this period include a fifteenth–sixteenth century Negoro lacquerware piece;¹⁰² and curiously, because this had not been a collecting area, late nineteenth and early twentieth century *zenga* 禅画.¹⁰³ How these new acquisitions will “create a dialogue” between the historical and contemporary collections has yet to be articulated or demonstrated by the Gallery.

Just as the representation of historical Japanese art at the QAG was curbed by a specialization in collection policy, so too at the ANG when, soon after it opened in 1982, Southeast Asian art became the focus of collecting.¹⁰⁴ In 1966, whilst preparing to amass a collection for the opening of the ANG, the recommending body, the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (CAAB), outlined a broad brief for Asian art which included “works of art representing the high cultural achievement of Australia’s neighbours in southern and eastern Asia...”¹⁰⁵ Following this brief, significant Japanese art works were collected in the early years of the ANG, including a late seventeenth century sculpture, *Zenzai Dōji* 善財童子 (*Sudhana*) by Enkū 円空 (1632–95), a hanging scroll painting 1811–37 *Tiger at a Waterfall* by Sengai Gibon 仙厓義梵 (1750–1837), and a thirteenth century sculpture of Amida Buddha.¹⁰⁶ However, by 1977, citing the need not to “...duplicate existing Australian collections of Asian art...,” and influenced by lobbyists for Southeast Asian art including the then honorary Curator of the Arts of Asia Piriya Krairiksh (1942–), Australian National University anthropologists James J. Fox and Anthony Forge and the current Senior Curator of Asian Art Robyn Maxwell convinced the then Director James Mollison “...to change ANG policy and invest in uncollected parts and aspects of Asia.”¹⁰⁷ They saw Indonesian textiles especially as a “relatively inexpensive acquisition.”¹⁰⁸

With the establishment of a separate Asian Art Department and the appointment of Dr. Michael Brand in 1988 as its founding Head, a broader collection policy was implemented with further significant Japanese art works being acquired.¹⁰⁹ These acquisitions included an early fourteenth century hanging scroll *The Buddha and the Sixteen Protectors* that has been

101 Matsuno Chikanobu, eighteenth century hanging scroll painting, *Standing Beauty*, purchased 2009 with funds from the Henry and Amanda Bartlett Trust through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation, acc. 2009.07.6.

102 A fifteenth–sixteenth century (Muromachi period) Negoro lacquer, black and red lacquer *Ewer* (*yutō*), purchased 2008 with funds from Playking Foundation through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation.

103 An early twentieth century stoneware *Sweets Container* with green glaze and brushed underglaze inscription by Shōun (Genpō Sōhan) (1848–1922), purchased 2009, The Queensland Government’s Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund.

104 Galloway 2003, p. 265.

105 National Gallery of Australia 2006, p. 1.

106 Enkū, *Figure of Zenzai Doji* (*Sudhana*), late seventeenth century, purchased 1977, accession no. 77.111; Sengai Gibon, *Tiger at a Waterfall*, 1811–37, ink, paper, purchased 1977, accession no. 77.104; and, *Amida Buddha*, thirteenth century, wood, lacquer, gold, precious stone, purchased 1980, accession no. 80.3628. A-B.

107 Heppell 2011.

108 Maxwell 2003, pp. 274–75.

109 After leaving the NGA in 1996, Brand worked as assistant director of the Queensland Art Gallery. In 2000 he became Director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and in 2005 he was appointed Director of the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California, a position he resigned from in 2010. In 2012, he was appointed Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

registered as a culturally significant Japanese work of art in an overseas collection (Figure 11);¹¹⁰ there was also a painting by Kanō Tan'yū 狩野探幽 (1602–72) of the Zen Buddhism patriarch Bodhidharma and a late-seventeenth century Noh robe.¹¹¹ These works were on show, as part of a “permanent display” when a new gallery the “Nomura Court,” sponsored by the Japanese Nomura securities company, was opened in 1991.¹¹²

Three years later with the appointment of a Japanese art specialist curator, there was a period in which Japanese art, especially ukiyo-e prints, became a collection and exhibition focus at the NGA.¹¹³ Japanese prints came under the auspices of the Department of International Prints and Illustrated Books which, up until 1994, had collected only two ukiyo-e prints mainly because of “...their profound influence on the art of many great nineteenth- and early twentieth-century artists of the West.”¹¹⁴ Following this appointment, and by garnering the support of this Department with their acquisition funding of \$13 million from the estate of the print collector and arts benefactor John Orde Poynton (1906–2001), a number of significant acquisitions of Japanese prints were made. These included Torii Kiyonaga’s 鳥居清長 (1752–1815) series c. 1785 *Sode no maki* 袖の巻 (Handscroll for the Sleeve), Katsushika Hokusai’s 葛飾北斎 three-volume illustrated book *Fugaku hyakkei* 富嶽百景 (One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji, vol. 1, 1834; vol. 2, 1835; vol. 3, c. 1842), as well as prints from Hokusai’s 1830–35 series *Fugaku sanjūrokkei* 富嶽三十六景 (Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji), his c. 1832 untitled series of large flowers and his 1835–36 series *Hyakunin isshu uba ga etoki* 百人一首姥がゑるとき (One Hundred Poems



Figure 11.

110 Accession no. NGA 89.346, conserved and remounted in 2008 at the Bokunindō Studio in Shizuoka by the National Research Institute, Tokyo 2008. For a discussion regarding the restoration of this work, see Wise 2009, pp. 32–33.

111 Accession no. 90.189 Kanō Tan'yū, *Portrait of Daruma*, 1667, ink and wash on silk, purchased 1990; accession no. 77.104, Sengai Gibon, *Tiger at a Waterfall*, 1811–37, ink, paper, purchased 1977; and accession no. 90.1774, *Outer Robe [Awase kariginu] for a Male Actor in a Noh Drama Performance*, late seventeenth century, silk, gold foil on paper, natural dyes, purchased 1990.

112 Brand et al. 1991, n. p.

113 Having completed his M.A. from the University of Melbourne and a Ph.D. from the University of Queensland, both in the area of Japanese art history, Gary Hickey was Curator of Asian Art at the National Gallery of Australia 1994–2002.

114 Kinsman 2001, p. 42.

Explained by the Nurse).¹¹⁵ Orde Poynton's support for such acquisitions was significant in that he had been a prisoner of war in Changi Prison.¹¹⁶

Drawing upon these acquisitions and works from other Australian public collections, two exhibitions raised the profile of Japanese art in Australia. One was the 1998 *Beauty & Desire in Edo Period Japan*, which included 154 artworks borrowed from all capital city public art museums. It was described by the then Director of the NGA Brian Kennedy as "one of the most popular Asian art exhibitions we have ever staged..."¹¹⁷ The second was the 2001 *Monet & Japan*, which profiled thirty-nine Monet paintings and eight-seven Japanese prints and paintings "...which in itself constitutes one of the most important displays of Japanese art to be shown in Australia."¹¹⁸ These exhibitions "...stimulated purchases and gifts of Japanese art" including around 120 ukiyo-e prints from the period 1995 to 2001, significant amongst which was a collection of thirty-one prints by the *Shin-hanga* 新版画 artist Natori Shunsen 名取春仙 (1886–1960) from his 1925–29 Kabuki actor portrait series of thirty-six prints, *Collection of Shunsen portraits*.¹¹⁹ The momentum provided by these two Japanese exhibitions did not, however, influence long term Asian art policy at the NGA, for with the appointment of Maxwell as Senior Curator and the subsequent departure of their Japanese art curator, emphasis on specialized collecting of Southeast Asia and India art was strengthened. The "Nomura Court" was renamed the "Indian Gallery" and art of other cultural traditions "sought selectively."¹²⁰ Japanese art was relegated to an "intimate lower gallery" in a display "loosely arranged by regional and cultural themes" of a "collection of works from China, Japan and Korea [that] is not large."¹²¹ More recently connections between the now retired Director Ron Radford, Japanese art dealers and the prominent benefactors Andrew Gwinnett and his wife Hiroko, as well as the input of new curators with knowledge of Japanese art, have resulted in acquisitions, especially of Japanese screens and the 2007 exhibition *Black Robe, White Mist: The Art of the Japanese Buddhist Nun Rengetsu*.

By the 1980s, the NGV and to a lesser degree the AGSA "...had the more important collection[s] of Asian [including Japanese] art, but it was the AGNSW that began to present an array of exciting Asian historical exhibitions, including from China, Japan and India, and to build a highly significant Asian collection."¹²² Whilst the development and presentation of Japanese art collections at most public galleries since the 1980s have been characterized by lack of long-term specialized knowledge, the AGNSW enjoyed a continuity in collection development. This was the result of the coming together of an informed and enthusiastic patron, an "Asia-literate" Director and an energetic senior curator, who all recognized the

115 These works by Hokusai were: *Gohyakurakanji Sazaidō* 五百らかん寺さざみどう from *Fugaku sanjūrokkei* 富嶽三十六景, 1830–35, acc. no. 2000.397; *Peonies and Butterfly* from an untitled series of large flowers, c. 1832, acc. no. 96.1251; and *Sangi Takamura* 参議筆 from *Hyakunin isshu uba ga etoki* 百人一首姥がゑるとき, 1835–36, acc. no. 2000.223.

116 Dr. John Orde Poynton AO, CMG, MA (Cantab.), MD (Cantab.), LLD (Hon) (Melb.). Cambridge Australia Scholarships website: <http://www.cambridgeaustralia.org.au/Donations/DrJohnOrdePoynton/tabid/147/Default.aspx>. Viewed 18 March 2015.

117 See, 10 April 1999 letters from Brian Kennedy to Mr. Hideki Hayashida, Commissioner, Agency for Cultural Affairs, NGA, file 94/0232.

118 Kennedy 2001, n. p.

119 National Gallery of Australia 2001, p. 36.

120 National Gallery of Australia. "Introduction." In *National Gallery of Australia Acquisitions Policy*, p. 1. NGA website, <http://nga.gov.au/Collection/AquPolicy.pdf>. Viewed 12 June 2014.

121 Maxwell 2008, p. 18.

122 Turner 2011.

relevance of Japanese art and developed a collection policy overseen by academically trained specialist staff. Up until 1979, the AGNSW had been considered “a poor relation” to the NGV and the AGSA, in terms of its collection of Japanese art. This situation changed with the appointment of Edmund Capon (1940–) in that year.¹²³ Capon was a recognized and published Chinese art specialist but, importantly for Japanese art, his vision for the Asian collection at the AGNSW was broad. Under his directorship, a diverse collection of Asian art developed that, unlike other state galleries, was inclusive of all Asian cultures and time periods.¹²⁴

One of Capon’s first acts was to create a separate department of Asian art. In realizing his vision, he wooed wealthy and influential supporters of Asian art including the businessman described as the “greatest collector of Japanese art in Australia,” Kenneth Baillieu Myer (1921–92).¹²⁵ Myer had earlier contributed to the NGV Asian art collection, but his contribution there was part of his broader philanthropic interests that did not demonstrate a connoisseur’s dedication to creating a cohesive collection. At the AGNSW, however, he found a commitment to Japan not matched by the NGV. His contribution to their Japanese collection followed upon his developing fascination with Japanese culture and art prompted by his meeting with Yasuko Hiraoka (1945–92), a Japanese woman who would become his wife and who, he stated, “continually extended my knowledge and delight in the arts of her country.”¹²⁶ Under Capon’s recommendation in 1979, Myer contacted the Tokyo-based art dealer Klaus Naumann on one of his regular visits to Japan, and through him and other dealers developed “a structured, cohesive collection” that was specifically tailored to the AGNSW.¹²⁷ Japanese screens were a particular early focus for Myer, and he took advantage of the tax benefits by agreeing on a purchase, before donating the acquisition funds to the AGNSW for them to complete the transaction. In 1980 such an arrangement allowed the AGNSW to acquire a c. 1660 pair of six-fold screens of *Rakuchū rakugaizu* 洛中洛外図 (Views in and around Kyoto), a fitting starting point for a collection that would develop a particular strength in Edo period painting. Ken and Yasuko Myer had seen this screen in an exhibition at the Kyoto National Museum, and later tracked down the dealer holding it.¹²⁸ Every year thereafter, Myer funded the acquisition of a major Japanese art work for the AGNSW, including pairs of screens by Unkoku Toeki, Kusumi Morikage 久隅守景 (c. 1620–90) and Kanō Tan’yū as well as hanging scroll paintings, which included the 1826 *Early Summer Mountain in the Rain* by Tani Bunchō 谷文晁 (1763–1840).¹²⁹ There was in addition a large scale portrait of a standing courtesan by Utagawa Toyoharu 歌川豊春 (1735–1814).¹³⁰ This was one of a number of ukiyo-e *nikuhitsuga* of *bijin* that would become a particular strength of the AGNSW collection, which comprised a *Standing Beauty* by Kaigetsudō Anchi 穰月堂安知 (active c. 1700–16) bequeathed to the AGNSW in 1993

123 Ebury 2008, p. 525.

124 Books and catalogues authored by Capon include *Princes of Jade* (1974); *Art and Archaeology in China* (1977); *Qin Shihuang: Terracotta Warriors and Horses* (1982); and *Tang China: Vision and Splendour of a Golden Age* (1989).

125 Klaus Naumann quoted in Ebury 2008, p. 527 and endnote 18, p. 588.

126 Menzies 1992, p. 8.

127 Ebury 2008, pp. 385 and 525. Ebury also states that Nauman met Myer in 1978 when he was collecting Japanese art.

128 Ebury 2008, p. 526.

129 This work, monumental in both size (174 x 96 cm) and its scaling of “mountains and water” dominating the human world, was in the possession of the Date daimyō family in Sendai (Menzies 1992, p. 9).

130 Capon 1992, p. 6.

after Myer's death, and *Portrait of Beautiful Woman (Bijin)* by Katsukawa Shun'ei 勝川春英 (1762–1891), purchased by the AGNSW in 1985 (Figure 12).

In selecting works, Myer was guided by both Capon and the Senior Curator of Asian Art, Jackie Menzies.¹³¹ This arrangement enabled the AGNSW to build a planned Japanese art collection, the first in Australia, in marked contrast to the random nature of collecting that had occurred in other state galleries. In 1990, Myer became an AGNSW gallery trustee, and in that role was an advocate for Asian art at their board meetings. Such advocacy was however cut short when, on 30 July 1992, Ken and Yasuko Myer were both killed in a light aircraft crash in Alaska. After his death, the Kenneth Myer Collection of Oriental Art was bequeathed to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. As a testament to Myer's advocacy for a greater understanding of Japanese art in Australia, the AGNSW Asian gallery included a gallery dedicated to them when it was refurbished in 2003: the Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Gallery of Japanese Art.

The other key to the development of Japanese art at the AGNSW has been the level of commitment to the employment of academically trained curators for the production of thematically focused and intellectually rigorous publications and exhibitions. Capon's background in Asian art, the first for a gallery director in Australia, helped steer this direction.¹³² So too did the appointment in 1980 of Jackie Menzies as the inaugural curator of Asian art. Menzies had completed a Master's degree at Sydney University researching *Nihonga*, and had travelled to Japan before beginning work at the AGNSW in 1976 in the Registration Department. Indicative of the AGNSW's commitment to Japanese art when they began to employ specialist Asian art curators, they first chose a Japanese art curator.¹³³ This approach resulted in academically rigorous exhibitions such as *Modern Boy, Modern Girl: Modernity in Japanese Art 1910–1935* (1998) and *Genji—The World of the Shining Prince* (2008), that have, through the contribution of Australian catalogue essayists, helped to profile Australian scholarship of Japanese art.



Figure 12.

131 "Ken was always supportive and flexible, perfectly agreeable towards providing the money towards a desired acquisition, whether it was one of his choice or our choice" (Ebury 2008, p. 526).

132 This was knowledge he had gained through his study for a Master of Philosophy degree in Chinese art and archaeology from London University's School of Oriental and African Studies, and later his work, from 1973–78 as assistant keeper in the Far Eastern Section at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. AGNSW website, <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/about-us/people/>. Viewed 1 January 2010.

133 Chiaki Ajioka (1952–) completed an M.A. in Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne and a Ph.D. at the Australian National University in 1996. She was a curator of Japanese Art at the AGNSW in 1996–2003.

This was in 1990 when a designated Asian Gallery was opened; in 1998, extensions made incorporated a Japanese tea room. In 1991, the AGNSW was instrumental in providing a forum for activities related to Asian art with the Asian Arts Society of Australia Inc. (TAASA) and their quarterly journal *TAASA Review*.¹³⁴ In 1996, an Asian art programs funding body was formed that, in 1999, was absorbed into VisAsia (The Australian Institute of Asian Culture and Visual Arts). This led to an expansion in 2003 of the Asian art gallery spaces. Reflecting the all-encompassing vision that has underlined the development of the Asian art collection at the AGNSW—and in marked contrast to the NGV, the QAG and the NGA—these new spaces were designed to allow for an integration of traditional and contemporary Asian art as well as culture specific displays. The approach was sustained by a philosophy of flexibility in collecting that had enabled the Asian art collection to be “pan-Asian.”¹³⁵

Postscript

For Australian galleries, the first two decades of the twenty-first century were marked by a number of policy decisions, resignations, appointments, acquisitions, publications and exhibitions that have impacted on the profile of historical Japanese art in Australian public art museums. In 2001 Japan, along with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, was included as a key collection area in an AGSA acquisition policy. In the same year, their long-standing Curator of Asian art retired and in 2003 a specialist in Indonesian textiles was appointed to the position.¹³⁶ In 2005, an inaugural Curator of Historical Asian Art was appointed at the QAG. That curator resigned in 2009, and it was not until 2011 that a replacement was found, the position being restructured as the Curator of Pre-modern and Contemporary Asian Art. Specialist Japanese art curatorial appointments were made at a number of art museums, an inaugural position at the NGV and two appointments at the AGNSW following an early resignation. However, in these developments the AGNSW took the lead in appointing an academically trained senior curator to their position in contrast to the other state and the national galleries where non-academically trained generalists were appointed to junior positions.¹³⁷ This more informed approach was also reflected in directorial appointments at Australian public art galleries during this period. In contrast to other art galleries, the AGNSW sought out a director with “... the right academic skill base, the right scholarly knowledge...”¹³⁸ Michael Brand was appointed to this position in 2012 and he, like his predecessor Edmund Capon, is an Asian art specialist. Driven by the now former Director Ron Radford and Senior Curator of Asian art, Robyn Maxwell, collecting at the NGA became more specialized with a focus on Indian art. However, poor stewardship of

134 Although designated as a national body with representatives in all states and territories except for Tasmania and Western Australia, the history and makeup of this society has had a strong Sydney base with a close association with the AGNSW. Jackie Menzies was Vice-President of TAASA in 1991–93 and President in 1993–2000.

135 Menzies 2003b, p. 6.

136 In 2010, a curatorial assistant with a background in Japanese studies was employed.

137 Such inadequacies had been acknowledged in 2001 by the inaugural Curator of Asian Art at the AGSA, Dick Richards, when he referred to himself as an “Accidental Curator” whose training was “through other people who know” (*TAASA Review*, 2001, p. 21).

138 Steven Lowy, Chair of the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ Board of Trustees, quoted in Ben Eltham: “The superstar economics of gallery directors” in *Crikey*, 17 February 2012. Posted on *Crikey* website, <http://www.crikey.com.au/2012/02/17/the-superstar-economics-of-gallery-directors/>. Viewed 20 May 2014.

this collection with \$11 million worth of acquisitions of smuggled cultural property and the forced repatriation of the same has resulted in loss of both reputation and acquisition funds that could have benefited Australian collections of Asian art, including those of Japan, had it been handled ethically.¹³⁹

In 2009, the AGSA exhibition *The Golden Journey: Japanese Art from Australian Collections*, included selected works from Australian public and private collections, and so provided an overview of Australian collections of Japanese art. A departure from earlier AGSA publications in relation to Japanese art was the critical essays in the exhibition catalogue, which profiled recent Australian scholarship of Japanese art.¹⁴⁰ In marked contrast were the reviews of this exhibition and catalogue which, in their lack of scholarly criticism, reveal inadequacies in knowledge of Japanese art amongst Australian cultural interpreters. This was an issue raised, in relation to Indian art, in 1996 by Pamela Gutman of the University of Sydney. Gutman's discussion was prompted by reviews of the NGA's 1995–96 exhibition, *The Vision of Kings, Art and Experience in India* reviews which led the Curator Michael Brand to decry “the lack of ‘peer assessment’ in the public arena.”¹⁴¹ In his review of *The Golden Journey*, former Director of the Queensland Art Gallery, Doug Hall focused on issues such as the nature of exhibitions and publications, but offered little in terms of a critique of this exhibition. Since Hall was responsible for formulating a policy at the QAG that stymied the development of their historical Japanese art collection (there were only two QAG works in this exhibition) in favor of contemporary art, it is surprising to learn that he considers “Australians need to know more about Japanese art.”¹⁴² Similarly, other art critics discussed the content of the exhibition, but more in the context of a précis of the catalogue interspersed with personal observations.¹⁴³

Perceptively, the Adelaide-based artist and writer Alison Main noted in her review of *The Golden Journey* “the slightly random nature of the show.”¹⁴⁴ Despite drawing upon collections nationwide, including the AGSA, there was an inability to link the exhibits thematically beyond medium, and an inability to represent art movements or styles adequately. Notwithstanding the quality of individual artworks, this indicates the absence of connoisseurship in the amassing of Japanese art collections in Australia, which in turn “points up the lack of continuity common to Australian collections.”¹⁴⁵ Connoisseurship based upon an educated understanding of the subject leads to coherent collections that provide a focus for critical interpretation around a single theme. The thematically coherent Japanese art exhibitions staged by the AGNSW follow this model, and allow new Australian scholarship of Japanese art to be profiled. Despite the quality of the NGV collection and

139 For one of numerous news reports on this subject, see *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 2014. Posted on *Sydney Morning Herald*, <http://www.smh.com.au/national/the-national-gallery-of-australia-dances-into-trouble-with-shiva-20140317-34xui.html>. Viewed 18 June 2014.

140 Despite including essays by some Australian trained scholars of Japanese art, it is reflective of the state of Australian education in relation to Japanese art that the exhibition was curated by James Bennett, a specialist in Indonesian textiles and that in editing and compiling the catalogue he relied on Amy Reigle Newland, an overseas trained Japanese art specialist. <http://arts.australia.or.jp/en/events/view/334/> accessed 20 April 2011.

141 Gutman 1996.

142 Hall 2009, p. 44.

143 Allen 2009, pp. 8–9. In reviewing this exhibition a similar approach was taken by Tan 2012.

144 Main 2009, p. 69.

145 Main 2009, p. 69.

the opening of a designated gallery of Japanese art in 2012, the random nature of their collecting and scholarship has restricted interpretation, as revealed in the repetitive nature of their Japanese art exhibitions. These inadequacies are indicative of a dearth of specialized education that includes the “classical arts of Asia,” which led Gutman to suggest that “experts should be consulted when traditional Asian art is under review...until such time as the Australian education system has responded to the Asian challenge and produced critics and readers with an understanding of the cultural contexts from which its art comes.”¹⁴⁶ Gutman’s suggestion should be broadened to include curators, for as Australian Japanese art collections grow, the inadequacies of the Australian education system in training competent cultural interpreters are reflected in the random nature of collecting and the lack of depth in interpretation.¹⁴⁷

Following the model set by the QAG, there is a more recent trend in Australia to mask inadequacies in knowledge of Asian cultural traditions by incorporating them under the umbrella of contemporary Asian art. In 2013, the Head of Asian Art at the AGNSW retired, followed in 2015 by the departure of the Curator of Japanese art. The current Director Michael Brand made the decision to axe the position of Head of Asian Art and incorporate Asian art into International Art. As had happened at the QAG where he had been Deputy Director, Brand appointed staff to oversee the Asian collection, including the Director of Collections and the Head of International Art, whose expertise is contemporary art. The problem with this changed focus is that “contemporary art requires little scholarship.”¹⁴⁸ Thus with diminished expertise assigned to historical Asian art, it is uncertain what this presages for the future of historical Japanese art in Australia.

Note on Japanese Art Collections Database Archives

A number of databases of Japanese art collections are referred to in this essay. All are open to the public.

1. Via the Museum Victoria “Collections & Research” at <http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections-research/>
2. Via the National Gallery of Victoria “NGV Collection” at <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/ngv-collection>
3. Via the Powerhouse Museum “Search the Powerhouse Museum Collection” at <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/menu.php>
4. Via the Art Gallery of New South Wales “Explore the Collection” at <http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/>
5. Via the Art Gallery of South Australia “Asian Collection Online” at <http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agsa/home/Collection/Asian/>

¹⁴⁶ Gutman 1996.

¹⁴⁷ Despite the popularity of Japanese language studies in Australia, it is revealing that programmes do not more extensively include a Japanese cultural component. As well, the conservatism of university art history departments and art museums acts as a barrier to those with Japanese cultural and linguistic skills seeking to specialize in art.

¹⁴⁸ See John McDonald June 23, 2012. *AGNSW: A new hang* posted on <http://johnmcdonald.net.au/2012/agnsw-a-new-hang/>. Viewed 7 September 2015.

6. Via the Queensland Art Gallery “Asian Art” at http://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/collection/asian_art
7. Via the National Gallery of Australia “Permanent Collection” at <http://www.nga.gov.au/Collections/>
8. Via the British Museum “Collection Online” at <http://www.britishmuseum.org>

Illustrations¹⁴⁹

- Figure 1. Tsukioka Yoshitoshi 月岡芳年 (1839–92). *Shin Oranda minami Waruresukoku no zu* 新阿蘭陀南ワスレス國之図 (Picture of the Country of New Holland South Wales), 1866. Ink and color on paper, woodcut, printed in colour inks, from multiple blocks 36 × 72cm. Andrew and Hiroko Gwinnett Fund, 2012, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.
- Figure 2. Ludovico Hart (c. 1836–1919). *Front of Japanese Court: Main Avenue*, 1880. Museum Victoria, Melbourne.
- Figure 3. *Jūichimen Kannon* 十一面観音, c. 1250 (Kamakura period). Wood, gold leaf, iron, lacquer, bronze, 85.0 × 29.2 cm. Bequest of Sir Samuel Way 1916, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.
- Figure 4. Kanzan Denshichi 乾山伝七 (1821–90). Vase with various designs in panels of different shapes, 19th century (Meiji period). Porcelain, 24.8 × 14.0 cm. Gift of the Japanese Commissioners at the International Exhibition 1881, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.
- Figure 5. Sasaki Sengen 佐々木泉玄 (1805–79). *Hannya the demon*, 1865. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Figure 6. Attributed to the Sōtatsu school. *Flowering Plants of the Four Seasons*, c. 1630–40. Six panel folding screen: ink and pigments on gold leaf on paper, silk, lacquer on wood, paper, metal; 150.4 × 364.2 cm (image and sheet). Felton Bequest, 1907, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Figure 7. Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎 (1760–1849). *Kanagawa oki namiura* 神奈川沖浪裏 (The Great Wave off Kanagawa) from series *Fugaku sanjūrokkei* 富嶽三十六景 (Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji), c. 1830–35. Color woodblock, 25.7 × 37.7 cm (image and sheet). Felton Bequest, 1909, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Figure 8. Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎 (1760–1849). *Old Man Singing and Girl with Shamisen*, c. 1844–c. 1848. Brush and ink. Felton Bequest, 1966, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
- Figure 9. Kodama Teiryō 小玉貞良 (active c. 1751–64). *Scenes of the Ezo Fishing Grounds*, c. 1751–64, Matsumae, Hokkaido. Hand scroll, ink and colour on paper, 27.2 × 871.2 cm. David Murray Bequest Fund 1940, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

149 I would like to thank the art galleries for giving me permission to use images of works from their collections. Note that in this essay, with a few exceptions, I have cited works of art as they have been catalogued by the museums under discussion. In many cases, these works of art are catalogued by English title only.

- Figure 10. *Shinzō* 神像 (Male and Female Shinto Deities), 15th–16th century, Usa Shrine area, Ōita, Kyushu. Camphor wood, 79.0 cm (male figure), 48.5 cm (female figure). Mrs. Mary Overton Gift Fund 1998, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.
- Figure 11. *The Buddha and the Sixteen Protectors*, 14th century (Kamakura period). Ink, colors and gold on silk, 115 × 60 cm, mount 208.3 × 79.4 cm. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 1989.
- Figure 12. Katsukawa Shun'ei 勝川春英 (1762–1819). *Portrait of a Beautiful Woman (Bijin)*, 1790s. Hanging scroll; ink and colour on silk; 83.7 × 33.0 cm image. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

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