

A Pure Invention: Japan, Impressionism, and the West, 1853-1906

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THE PLAYWRIGHT and poet Oscar Wilde traveled little outside of Europe, yet he felt as if he had journeyed to Japan. In 1891, he wrote that after careful examination of the woodblock prints of artists like Hiroshige and Hokusai, you could “sit in the park or stroll down Piccadilly, and if you cannot see an absolutely Japanese effect there, you will not see it anywhere”¹—not even, Wilde proclaimed, in Tokyo itself.

Forty years earlier, in 1851, Westerners had known little about the floating kingdom. Since the early 17th century, Japan had been completely isolated from the West, save for a few Dutch traders who conducted business around Nagasaki. Then, in 1853, the American Commodore Matthew Perry forced Japan to trade with the West under threat of naval bombardment. Kimonos, fans, and especially woodblock prints by the great Japanese artists flooded European markets.

These Japanese goods had a particularly profound impact on the arts. Debussy was inspired to write *La mer* (1905), his most groundbreaking and influential piece, after seeing Katsushika Hokusai’s print of *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*.² The Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein would turn to Japanese art as he was composing powerful cinematic images.³ Eventually, the image of the “Great Wave”⁴ that Debussy admired would become a symbol of all things Japan.⁵

The “Japanese effect” was most prominent in art. As Japanese art entered European salons, French artists were beginning to experiment with Impressionism. Painters like Monet, reacting in part to the industrialization of Europe and the rise of photography, were interested in capturing how light interacted with a certain object at a given moment in time. In Japanese woodblock prints, they found the simplicity and the ethereal quality that they strove to create in their art.

Critics called this fascination with the Far East “Japonisme.” By the end of the 19th century, there were more woodblock prints in Europe than there were in Japan as wealthy individuals like Frederick Richards Leyland amassed huge collections.⁶ Yet, as Wilde noted, the Japan of Monet, van Gogh, Cezanne, Cassatt, and others only existed in the woodblock prints of Hiroshige and Hokusai, not in Tokyo. As the Impressionists created masterpieces, Japan was industrializing, becoming an imperial power that would annex Korea and win territory from China and Russia. The natural idyll of Hokusai and Hiroshige was long gone.

The encounter between Japan and the West that occurred in 1853 marked the beginning of a vast artistic exchange between two disparate regions of the world. As Western artists were acquainted with and subsequently captivated by the woodblock prints of Hiroshige, Hokusai, and others, their artistic exploration established the foundation for modern art.

Japan and the West Before 1853

Even Columbus⁷ knew of Japan, but unknown to Europeans, the country had been controlled by feudal lords (called daimyo) for over five centuries.⁸ In the late 16th century, as the Portuguese began to purchase luxury goods from China and Jesuit missionaries arrived in the floating kingdom, a daimyo named Oda Nobunaga and his allies Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu sought to unite Japan under one central government.⁹

The Jesuits, meanwhile, attempted to convert as many Japanese to Christianity as possible.¹⁰ They brought with them detailed maps of the world that featured European-style illustrations of different peoples. Japanese artists began to copy the art that the Jesuits brought with them,¹¹ but this encounter between East and West was not to last. In 1614, Tokugawa Ieyasu, having defeated the last of the rival daimyo and striving to rid himself of any threat to his shogunate, passed a series of decrees stating that all Westerners would be driven out of Japan, all Christians in the country would be persecuted, and Japan would not trade with any foreign power.¹² The floating kingdom of Nippon was effectively isolated from the rest of the world.

For the next two centuries, while Europeans discovered the wonders of the New World, the marvels of China, and the great civilizations of Africa, Japan would remain a mystery. The policy of isolation initiated a “Pax Tokugawa” in Japan.¹³ Under the stable rule of the shogunate, Japan flourished, and Japanese art developed its own unique language, free of outside influence.

The Floating World

The two major Japanese artists of the Tokugawa period were Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) and Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849).¹⁴ Both began their careers apprenticed to artists who specialized in portraits of Kabuki actors.¹⁵ These portraits attempted to capture the exaggerated expression of the actor, but they also placed a special focus on fiction and reality.¹⁶ Artists enjoyed contrasting the mask of a Kabuki actor with his more solemn and realistic expression underneath. Both Hiroshige and Hokusai painted these portraits early in their career and both spent a considerable amount of time painting Japanese flora and fauna.¹⁷

Both artists, however, were recognized for their series of woodblock prints, created in the ukiyo-e, or floating world, style. Ukiyo-e prints emphasized the supremacy of nature and the fleeting character of a moment.¹⁸ Woodblock prints were surprisingly cheap because an artist could create one image and it could be printed again and again.¹⁹ The artist might produce several editions of one print, varying the intensity and the tone of the colors each time. Hiroshige and Hokusai were commissioned by publishers to create a series of prints on one theme. Hiroshige's most famous series is *One Hundred Famous Views in Edo*²⁰ while Hokusai was renowned for his *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*.²¹ In contrast to many of the Impressionists that they would inspire, both Hokusai²² and Hiroshige²³ were recognized as great artists in their time. Hokusai published ten volumes of his *Manga*, collections of drawings designed to instruct aspiring artists how to draw like a master.²⁴ The income he generated from his 3,500 woodblock print designs was considerable—he was able to live a comfortable lifestyle and pay off his grandson's sizeable gambling debts.²⁵ Unlike many working-class Japanese of his day, Hiroshige traveled extensively outside of Edo.²⁶

Perry's Encounter

As Hiroshige and Hokusai built their reputations, profound change was occurring in Japan. In the 1830s and 1840s, peasant uprisings and famine rocked Japan, and the shogunate did little to address this instability.²⁷ When four American naval ships arrived off the coast of Japan, the Tokugawa shogunate was already crumbling.²⁸

The Americans had sent two earlier expeditions to Japan with the purpose of establishing relations,²⁹ but both the 1832 and 1846 ventures were unsuccessful.³⁰ The 1853 expedition was able to open Japan to the West because of the precarious position of the shogunate and the personality of its leader, Commodore Matthew Perry.³¹

Unlike the commanders of the earlier expeditions, Perry did not ask the Japanese if they wanted to establish trading relations—he forced them to do so.³² He threatened the Japanese with a naval bombardment if they did not open their ports to American commerce.³³ In his diary, he justified this decision by writing that the United States was clearly superior to Japan. Therefore, the American “desire to be on terms of amity with all nations”³⁴ outweighed Japan’s sovereignty. Commodore Perry was hailed as a hero in the West,³⁵ and there were even calls for him to run for president.³⁶

A Cultural Exchange

Almost immediately after Commodore Perry arrived in Japan, the artistic exchange between Japan and the West started. One of the most popular woodblock prints of 1854 were portraits of the Americans who had played notable roles in the Perry expedition.³⁷ While Perry and his lieutenants were depicted wearing the distinctly Western regalia of the navy, these portraits were not dissimilar to the portraits of Kabuki actors that had been created for centuries before Perry’s expedition.³⁸ Japanese artists did not know how to depict the features of the Western “hairy barbarians.”³⁹

Likewise, Western artists did not know what to make of the Hokusai and Hiroshige prints that soon started to appear in Europe.⁴⁰ Since the Renaissance, all of Western art had been grounded in the principles of the Greeks. Even though styles varied, most artists accepted the guidelines for proportion and figure outlined by the classical sculptors. Most used the perspective and foreshortening techniques first developed by the Romans in their mosaics and then expanded on by early Renaissance artists like Masaccio.⁴¹

Japanese art did not make use of perspective and foreshortening. Rather, Japanese landscapes seemed oddly flat. While post-Renaissance artists paid great attention to the anatomy of their figures,⁴² Japanese artists only suggested the outline of a figure with cursory lines.

European artists had seen equally exotic painting from China before, but Japanese art emerged in the salons at a turning point in art history. Since the Renaissance, artists had pursued realism in their work. They wanted to make their landscapes and pictures reflections of the real world.⁴³ Then, in the 1830s, photography was invented, and a photograph could reflect the real world better than any painting could.⁴⁴ As photography became more widespread in an increasingly industrialized world, artists were left wondering what the purpose of painting was.⁴⁵

Among the first champions of Japanese art were the de Goncourt brothers. Before coming into contact with the prints of Hokusai and Hiroshige, the brothers, renowned for their hedonistic lifestyles, collected Rococo art,⁴⁶

but upon seeing Japanese art, they wrote that it was “as great an art as Greek art” because “everything [Japanese artists] do is taken from observation.”⁴⁷

Artistic Exploration

As the de Goncourts built their collection of Japanese art, artists like Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro were experimenting with a new, Impressionist style of art.⁴⁸ Impressionism was the art of the moment. On a typical day, Monet would take with him multiple canvases to a particular site. Then, as the light changed throughout the day, Monet would create paintings of the same subject at different times of day. Monet would take only a few minutes to sketch out a painting, and his rapid working method befitted an increasingly industrial society where trains passed in and out of a station in minutes⁴⁹ and factory machines could produce hundreds of products in an hour.⁵⁰

Japanese art did not inspire Monet to paint the Rouen Cathedral or the haystacks or the water lilies⁵¹ again and again, but it did reaffirm his Impressionist convictions.⁵² Hokusai’s manga gave the Impressionists a rationale for “liberating [themselves] from conventionally stiff portrayals of human and natural forms.”⁵³

For other artists, like Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt, Japanese art did more than reinforce their views of painting. Cassatt, renowned for her scenes of mothers and children, took particular inspiration from the work of Utamaro, a forerunner of Hokusai and Hiroshige. Several of her works mirror Utamaro’s prints.⁵⁴ Like Utamaro, both Cassatt and Degas would paint women bathing,⁵⁵ and all three artists carefully examined curved forms and the power of line. Degas’s famous scenes of the theater and the ballet were presaged in the portraits of Kabuki actors and Hokusai’s vibrant prints of public baths.⁵⁶

Still, perhaps the great admirer of Japanese art was Vincent van Gogh. Van Gogh would copy Hokusai and Hiroshige’s prints onto a canvas in order to better understand the way he used line and form.⁵⁷ In one of his letters to his brother Theo, van Gogh wrote that even though the French countryside that surrounded him did not resemble any of Hokusai’s prints, looking at the landscapes in a Japanese way will “give you a true idea of the simplicity of nature here.”⁵⁸ For van Gogh, Japan was a manifestation of nature, and in painting his own Impressionistic masterpieces, van Gogh would write that “all my work is in a way founded on Japanese art.”⁵⁹

Disillusionment

As van Gogh was writing, however, the Japan of the ukiyo-e prints was fading. Perry’s mission had brought strife to the island nation. Rebellious

samurai soon toppled the shogunate, and civil war occurred. At the heart of this conflict was a choice. Japan could either resist Western influence and risk becoming a powerless nation like China, or Japan could emulate the West and have colonies of its own.⁶⁰

Ultimately, Japan chose the latter option. In 1868, the Emperor Meiji was declared the head of state of Japan.⁶¹ Advisors to the emperor quickly established a German-style parliament and an English-style cabinet.⁶² After traveling to Europe to see the industrial wonders of the West, Japan began to build factories.⁶³ Even Japanese art began to move away from the ukiyo-e style⁶⁴ and towards the Western Greco-Roman tradition.⁶⁵ By 1910, Japan had defeated Russia and China in territorial wars and had annexed Korea as a colony of the Empire of Japan.⁶⁶ Japanese artists had begun to paint in Western styles, and Western architects were invited to the country to build skyscrapers.

While the Japan of the Impressionist era was not the Japan of Hokusai and Hiroshige, Japanese art continued to have a profound effect on Western works, even as artists realized in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 that Japan was not a pastoral paradise.⁶⁷ Just as Hokusai turned to painting Mt. Fuji in the last years of his career, so did Paul Cezanne.⁶⁸ Cezanne's Mt. Saint-Victoire, painted at multiple angles and at different times of day, was oddly reminiscent of Hokusai's series.⁶⁹

The Legacy of Japonisme

Cezanne died in 1906, and in 1907, a massive retrospective of his work was held in Paris.⁷⁰ A young Spanish artist attended that retrospective, and was so moved by Cezanne's mountains that he would later say those paintings "flooded"⁷¹ all his work.

That artist's name was Pablo Picasso, and his Cubism would represent the next step forward from Impressionism. Cezanne's mountains were influenced by Hokusai's work, and so indirectly, Hokusai played a role not only in the Japonisme of Impressionism, but in the development of modern art.

Artists like Monet, van Gogh, and Whistler relished in the exoticism and simplicity of Japanese art and glorified Japan as a natural paradise. However, Oscar Wilde was correct. Their Japan was a "pure invention," and the art of late 18th-century and early 19th-century Japan did not resemble the industrialized Japan of the late 19th century and early 20th century.

The Western encounter with Japanese art was a defining moment in art history, just as the Japanese encounter with the West had enormous repercussions on global politics. The Meiji Restoration and the industrialization that followed made Japan into a world power and an

equal of many European countries. At the same time, modern art may not have developed in the same way had artists not come into contact with Japan. While these artists were unable to see what Japan was becoming around the turn of the 20th century, they were able to see that art did not have to be confined by the boundaries of Europe. The cultural exchange with Japan launched decades of artistic exploration that did not end with the Impressionists or the post-Impressionists. After 1905, the pursuit of Wilde's "Japanese effect" ended, but artists continued to seek out bold, modern, and abstract ways of seeing the world.

Notes

1. Wilde, p. 38-39.
2. Fulcher, p. 144-145.
3. Eisenstein, p. 34.
4. See Figure 1 in Appendix A.
5. Guth, p. 16-29.
6. Lambourne, p. 91.
7. Commodore Perry, who would open Japan to the West, was compared to Columbus after his expedition. See "The Japan Expedition."
8. Hall, p. 137.
9. Hane, p. 111.
10. Hane, p. 122.
11. Lambourne, p. 13.
12. Tokugawa Iemitsu, Sakoku Edict of 1635. The policy began under Tokugawa Ieyasu continued under the rule of his grandson, Tokugawa Iemitsu. This 1635 decree is the most complete expression of the Tokugawa shogunate policy.
13. Hall, p. 161.
14. Forrer, *Hiroshige*, p. 11.
15. Robinson, p. 17-21.
16. See Figure 2 in Appendix A.
17. Forrer, *Hokusai*, p. 24-27.
18. Robinson, p. 9.
19. Smith, p. 36.
20. Forrer, *Hiroshige*, p. 21. Interestingly, Hiroshige also completed a *One Hundred Famous Views of Mt. Fuji* series in response to Hokusai's work. Hiroshige attacked Hokusai because he felt he did not represent the majesty of Mt. Fuji adequately enough.
21. Forrer, *Hokusai*, p. 22. Hokusai also completed a series celebrating the Year of the Horse, the Pacific Ocean, and bridges across Japan.

22. Forrer, *Hokusai*, p. 30-31.
23. Smith, p. 37.
24. Hokusai's *Manga* included a volume that depicted daily life in Japan, and his focus on ordinary activities resonated with the Impressionists. See Duret, p. 28.
25. Forrer, *Hokusai*, p. 30.
26. Smith, p. 39. Edo was renamed Tokyo during the Meiji Restoration of 1868.
27. Hane, p. 198.
28. Gordon, p. 46.
29. Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State, outlined the reasons for sending American ships to Japan. See Webster, p. 427-429.
30. The 1853 expedition was to be helmed by a Commodore Aulick, but he was replaced with Commodore Perry due to fear of another failure. See "The Expedition to Japan—Mr. Webster's Instructions to Commodore Aulick."
31. Morison, p. 264-265.
32. Morison, p. 324-325.
33. Perry, p. 90.
34. Perry, p. 104.
35. See "Testimonial to Commodore Perry."
36. See "The Next Presidency."
37. Morison, p. 305.
38. See Figure 3 in Appendix A.
39. The Japanese ruling classes used this term to refer to Perry and the Americans during the initial exchange of 1853.
40. Curiosity and admiration for Japanese culture was not limited to artists. See "The New York Crystal Palace—Arrival of the Japanese Contribution" and "The Japanese Empire—Predictions of the Country's Trade and Commerce."
41. Novotny, p. 350-351.
42. The Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood also sought to escape the influence of the Renaissance. They painted ethereal, decorative scenes meant to reflect art before the innovations on the painter Raphael. See Giebelhausen, p. 63.
43. Novotny, p. 344.
44. Novotny, p. 273.
45. Genova, p. 453-460.
46. Lambourne, p. 32.
47. De Goncourt, p. 241.
48. See "Claude Monet par lui-même."
49. See Figure 4 in Appendix A.
50. Novotny, p. 346-48.
51. See Figures 5 and 6 in Appendix A.
52. Napier, p. 41. Although some of his paintings (such as those of the water lilies) were Japanese-influenced, Monet was already painting the same subject again and again before he came into contact with Japanese art.
53. Napier, p. 40.
54. See Figures 7 and 8 in Appendix A.

55. Dumas, p. 64.
56. Lambourne, p. 41.
57. Lambourne, p. 45-46.
58. Van Gogh, p. 363.
59. Van Gogh, p. 364.
60. Gordon, p. 61-75.
61. Although Western newspapers did report that the civil war in Japan was over and the Emperor (or the Mikado) was controlling the country, most did not realize the significance of the Meiji Restoration. See “Advices to December 15—Civil War at an End—The Mikado and Tycoon—Ship News” and “The Civil War in Japan is Nearly Over.”
62. Hall, p. 273-284.
63. Gordon, p. 95-96.
64. See Figure 9 in Appendix A. This print is by Hiroshige’s grandson, and it clearly depicts Western clothing and the modern architecture of Japan. It is a sharp contrast from his grandfather’s work.
65. Duret, p. 20.
66. Hall, p. 301-302.
67. Napier, p. 15.
68. Lambourne, p. 50.
69. See Figures 10 and 11 in Appendix A.
70. See “French Autumn Salon—A Triumphant Success for the Artists Who Exhibit at It.”
71. Picasso as quoted in the Art Institute of Chicago curator’s notes on the exhibition “Picasso and Cézanne.” Available at <http://www.artic.edu/picasso-and-c-zanne>.

Appendix A



Figure 1: Hokusai, Katsushika. *The Great Wave off Kanagawa from Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji*, c. 1830-33. Color woodblock print. Image courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Figure 2: Sharaku, Toshusai. *The actor Ichikawa Ebizo IV as Takemura Sadanoshin*, 1794. Color woodblock print. Image courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Figure 4: Monet, Claude. *Arrival of the Normandy Train, Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of Art Institute of Chicago.



Figure 5: Monet, Claude. *The Japanese Footbridge*, 1899. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Art.



Figure 6: Hiroshige, Utagawa. *Precincts of Kameido Tenjin Shrine (Kameido Tenjin keidai)*, from the series “One Hundred Famous Views of Edo (*Meisho Edo hyakkei*)”, 1856. Color woodblock print. Image courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.



Figure 7: Cassatt, Mary. *The Letter*, c. 1890-91. Drypoint, softground etching, and aquatint on laid paper. Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Art.



Figure 8: Utamaro, Kitagawa. *Courtesan Hinazuru of the Keizetsu House*, c. 1794-95. Color woodblock print. Image courtesy of the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts.



Figure 9: Hiroshige, Utagawa III. *The Fine Arts Museum and the Shōjō Fountain at the Second National Industrial Exposition in Ueno Park, 1881*. Color woodblock print. Image courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 10: Cézanne, Paul. *Mont Sainte-Victoire (La Montagne Sainte-Victoire)*, 1892-1895. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia.



Figure 11: Hokusai, Katsushika. *A Mild Breeze on a Fine Day* from *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji*, c. 1830-33. Color woodblock print. Image courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

“Advices to December 15—Civil War at an End—The Mikado and Tycoon—Ship News.” *The Evening Telegraph* [Philadelphia, PA] 13 Jan. 1869 first ed.: 1. Print.

This newspaper article from 1869 tells of the conclusion of the Japanese civil war. The newspaper reports that the Mikado (emperor) is now ruling the country. However, in reality, the Emperor Meiji was little more than a symbol for the Westernizers who had taken power in Japan. The editors of the newspaper fail to note that the Meiji restoration means that Japan is moving towards industrialization. Still, the article was useful because it helped me to decipher the terminology the American newspapers of the time used. The Mikado is the emperor, and the Tycoon is the shogun.

De Goncourt, Edmund. *The Journal of the De Goncourts*. London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1910. Print.

Edmund and Jules de Goncourt were two brothers who were prominent members of the French upper class. They lived a hedonistic lifestyle—both brothers were

said to share the same mistress—and they collected Rococo paintings and erotic prints before they turned their attention to Japanese art. Hearing the de Goncourts discuss the simplicity of Japanese art reminds one how exotic Japanese art really was when it first appeared in Europe.

Eisenstein, Sergei. *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1949. Print.

Eisenstein, in my opinion, is the greatest film director in history because of his contribution to our understanding of the medium. Eisenstein studied Kabuki theater and Japanese culture in Moscow shortly after the Russian Revolution, and he explains how the prints of Utamaro, Hokusai, and Hiroshige influenced the beautiful and ingenious shots in his films. It was interesting to see how the influence of Japanese art was felt beyond Impressionism.

“French Autumn Salon—A Triumphant Success for the Artists Who Exhibit at It.” *New-York Daily Tribune* [New York, NY] 13 Oct. 1907: 8, Print.

This newspaper article documents the French Autumn Salon of 1907, which included a massive Cezanne retrospective. The article includes a list of all the notable people who attended. However, they missed perhaps the most important person there. A young Pablo Picasso would see Cezanne’s work and be inspired to create Cubism. The legacy of Japonisme was inherited by Picasso via Cezanne.

Monet, Claude. “Claude Monet Par Lui-Même.” *Le Temps* 26 Nov. 1900: 1. Print.

This is a recollection by the Impressionist Claude Monet that was published in a French newspaper. Interestingly, Monet makes no mention of the Japanese art that played such a defining role in his career. Instead, he talks about the early, heady days of his professional life, when he was creating the new style of Impressionism along with Pissarro, Renoir, and Caillebotte. I used this memoir primarily in discussing the roots of the Impressionist style.

Perry, Matthew C. *The Personal Journal of Commodore Matthew C. Perry*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1968. Print.

The journal of Matthew Perry is fascinating to read because it is a real-time account of the Japan expedition. It documents his thoughts as history was happening. Perry certainly believes the Japanese are inferior to the Americans, and he believes he has some kind of divine right to force Japan to trade with the West. After 1853, Perry played a small role in Japanese history, but I found this to be a fantastic source when researching the events of 1853.

Selby, Julian A. “The Civil War in Japan is Nearly Over.” *The Daily Phoenix* [Columbia, SC] 29 Nov. 1868: 1. Print.

This article is a report of the Meiji Restoration as it happened. Like other contemporary writers, Selby does not recognize that the Meiji Restoration is a major event and will influence Japan’s position in the world and history tremendously. Selby also does not understand all the different players and the social, economic, and political forces that led to the Meiji Restoration. Still, it is fascinating to read about the Meiji Restoration happening in real time.

“Testimonial to Commodore Perry.” *Daily American Organ* [Washington, D.C.] 22 Nov. 1854: 2. Print.

This laudatory article was written by Americans stationed in Canton (a province in the southeastern part of China.) It salutes Commodore Perry for his “diplomatic work in Japan and describes him as a man of character, as someone who is fearless, and as someone who embodies all the principles of America. Today, Commodore Perry is usually seen as a symbol of Western imperialism and overreach, and there is a debate over whether his actions in Japan were justified. However, there was no debate then, and Commodore Perry was a genuine American hero.

“The Expedition to Japan—Mr. Webster’s Instructions to Commodore Aulick.” *Cooper’s Clarksburg Register* [Clarksburg, WV] 05 May 1852: 3. Print.

Commodore Aulick was supposed to head the Japan expedition before he was replaced with the more experienced Commodore Perry. The newspaper actually reprints Webster’s full letter to Commodore Aulick. This article provided some background on the development of the Japan expedition, but it also showed how excited the American populace was to read about such a venture. They wanted to read Webster’s whole letter and be a part of this history.

“The Japan Expedition.” *The New York Herald* [New York, NY] 23 May 1853 morning ed.: 1. Print.

This article was written as Commodore Perry was going to Japan, breaking the Tokugawa policy of isolation, and opening Japan to the West. The authors predict that Commodore Perry’s expedition will go down in history as one of the greatest and will be ranked alongside Columbus’s voyages and Lewis and Clark’s trek. History has proved them wrong—while many schoolchildren can name Columbus or Lewis and Clark, few know who Commodore Perry is. Still, I loved reading about the expedition as it was happening. This article really made me understand that the Japan expedition was not just a diplomatic mission. It was a crucial American achievement in 1853.

“The Japanese Empire—Predictions of the Country’s Trade and Commerce.” *The New York Herald* [New York, NY] 23 Apr. 1852 morning ed.: 2. Print.

In 1852, the Japan expedition had not yet taken place, but there was still great interest in Japan. This full-page article speculates on what goods Japan might have to offer. The authors also believed that since the United States had opened Japan to the West, they would have a trading advantage. The Japanese would be so grateful to be in contact with the West that they would give the U.S. everything valuable that they had. This did not occur. Japan became an industrial power. If one told the authors that in less than a century we would fight a long war against Japan, they would not believe it. The authors, like the Impressionists, only saw Japan as an exotic locale.

“The Next Presidency.” *The American Patriot* [Clinton, LA] 27 Dec. 1854: 3. Print.

This article encourages Commodore Matthew Perry to run for president in 1856. Commodore Perry was a hero to the Americans of 1854, and he was compared with the great explorers of the past. Today, he is mostly forgotten and is not remembered

as one of America's great leaders, but some believed that he could be the man to unite the country and solve its problems even as the nation was coming apart over the issue of slavery.

“The New York Crystal Palace—Arrival of the Japanese Contribution.” *The New York Herald* [New York, NY] 12 Jul. 1853 morning ed.: 1. Print.

This is a meticulous documentation of all the Japanese items sent to New York for the Crystal Palace exhibition. Commodore Perry was in Japan when this was published, and it is fascinating to see how carefully each of the items was described. It was not only artists that were enthralled by Japan, but the general public as well.

Tokugawa, Iemitsu. “The Closed Country Edict of 1635.” *Wake Forest University*, n.d. Web. 28 February 2016.

The policy of Japanese isolation was begun by Tokugawa Ieyasu was continued by his grandson, Iemitsu. The closed country edict lays out very strict guidelines for foreign ships in Japan and is the most complete and thorough decree regarding the policy of isolation. I had hoped to use Ieyasu's original decree, but this edict is the decree that is most representative of the isolationist policy.

Van Gogh, Vincent. *Dear Theo: The Autobiography of Vincent van Gogh*. New York: Signet, 1969. Print.

Van Gogh wrote a plethora of letters to his brother Theo, an art dealer, over his lifetime. (Famously, he once sent Theo his ear after he cut it off.) In some of these letters, van Gogh expresses his thoughts on Japan and Japanese art. Van Gogh saw Japan as a perfect paradise, untouched by industrialization. Of course, Japan was none of this, but it is fascinating to read van Gogh's thoughts. One can almost sense his enthusiasm for Hokusai and Hiroshige through his words.

Webster, Daniel. *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster*. Ed. Edward Everett. Vol. 14. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1903. Print.

Webster, the great senator who was responsible for keeping the country together through the 1850s, became Secretary of State partly because he wanted to oversee the enforcement of the Compromise of 1850. However, he also turned attention to Japan. His motivations for going to Japan, as outlined in his letter to Commodore Aulick, are primarily to get natural resources such as coal and to demonstrate that America can be as much of an imperial power as the great European countries. It was interesting to read why opening Japan was such an important objective for the United States in the 1850s.

Wilde, Oscar. *Intentions*. Leipzig: Heinemann and Balestier, 1891. Print.

Intentions is Oscar Wilde's commentary on the modern world, and it is structured as a dialogue between two bourgeois individuals, Cyril and Vivian. The book is by turns philosophical and funny. I was surprised to learn that Wilde commented on Japonisme and realized that Japanese art did not reflect Japan. The fact that Wilde included Japonisme in his discussion of social and political affairs shows how influential the movement was even in the late 19th century.

Secondary Sources

Dumas, Anne. *The Private Collection of Edgar Degas*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997. Print.

This is a catalogue for an exhibition that was shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The catalogue documents Degas's work as well as his relationship with Mary Cassatt. It discusses how Degas and Cassatt borrowed subject matter from Japanese arts and how the graceful prints of Utamaro provided them with an ephemeral, simple style. Degas and Cassatt are famous for their depictions of everyday life, and they were inspired by Japanese art in creating their scenes of dancers, mothers, opera goers, and domestic life.

Forrer, Matthi. *Hokusai*. Munich: Prestel, 2010. Print.

Forrer examines Hokusai's life and works throughout this collection of Hokusai's work. She explores Hokusai's place in the Japanese society in which he lived, his influence on later Japanese art, and his development as an artist. There are probably sources on Hokusai that delve into greater detail, but Forrer provided enough detail for my purposes. Using Forrer's information, I was able to explain Hokusai's relationship to the Impressionists.

Forrer, Matthi. *Hiroshige*. Munich: Prestel, 2011. Print.

Forrer gives a brief but quite thorough overview of Hiroshige's career. She documents the relationship between Hiroshige and other Japanese artists, examines his place in Japanese society of the time, and most importantly, traces his development as an artist throughout his career. There are other sources that give a more authoritative biography of Hiroshige, but Forrer gave me the essential details of Hiroshige's career.

Fulcher, Jane F. *Debussy and His World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. Print.

Fulcher discusses Debussy's affinity for Japanese prints. Debussy is often cited by music historians as an example of a musical Impressionist. What Monet was to art, Debussy was to music. Debussy's flowing, stream-of-consciousness style also sought to capture the moment, and it is interesting that the two Impressionists in different fields both drew inspiration from Japanese art.

Genova, P.A. "A Curious Facet of Modern French Writing: Situating Japonisme between East and West." *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 13.4 (2009): 453-460, Print.

This article places Japonisme in a political and historical context. It focuses primarily on France, the epicenter of the movement. The author, Pamela Genova, explores how Japanese art influenced the French, but she also discusses how Japanese artists were influenced by the influx of French and European art. The historical discussion of Japonisme in the article begins with the Enlightenment, which occurred a hundred years prior to Impressionism. The French were open to new ideas, and after the 1850s, the Japanese were open to new ideas as well. Genova also discusses how Japonisme was different from other foreign artistic

movements in France (such as Wagnerism, coming from Germany) and also writes about the aesthetic and psychological ideas that resonated with Western painters as they looked at Japanese art (and vice versa.) While comprehensive, the article does not talk much about Japonisme outside of France.

Giebelhausen, Michaela. "The Religious and Intellectual Background." *The Cambridge Companion to the Pre-Raphaelites*. Ed. Elizabeth Prettejohn. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 62-75. Print.

The Pre-Raphaelites were a group of artists who believed art was most beautiful before the painter Raphael and the Renaissance. They painted Shakespearean and biblical scenes in a pastiche of the Gothic International Style, which was used in Siena, Italy, in the 15th century. The pre-Raphaelites were a world away from the Impressionists, and they were not influenced by Japanese art. Still, they were trying to get away from traditional representations of forms and stories in the same way that the Japanese-inspired Impressionists were breaking away from the European tradition.

Gordon, Andrew. *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.

Gordon does not mention art at all in his history of Japan, but he does provide invaluable historical context for my paper as he discusses the effects of the Meiji Restoration. Reading Gordon's book gave me a greater understanding of the historical, political, social, and cultural context that influenced developments in the art world.

Guth, Christine. "The Local and the Global: Hokusai's Great Wave in Contemporary Product Design." *Design Issues* 28.2 (2012): 16-29, Print.

This article explores the use of that same woodblock print in popular culture and in advertising. Guth writes that the Great Wave has become the national image of Japan, and often, when advertisers want to promote a Japanese product, they will attach an image of the print to their product to capitalize on the foreign quality of the product. This print has been a boon to museums—in fact, much of the product sold in museum gift stores features the woodblock print. Arguably, the print is more popular in the West as a symbol of Japan than in Japan. Guth does not really explain why the image is such a powerful tool for marketing products or why the piece is such a compelling depiction of nature and Japan. However, I value this article as proof of the continuing impact of Japanese art. One print, out of the thousands that Hokusai created, has become a symbol of nature and beauty all over the world. Furthermore, the print is one of the first things people think of when they think of Japan—evidence of how influential Japanese art has become in the West.

Hall, John Whitney. *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1970. Print.

One of the drawbacks of Hall's history of Japan is that it is nearly fifty years old. While it is a standard text as far as Japanese history goes, this is not the best source for some of the more modern (post Meiji Restoration) history because the book cannot address how that history affects modern Japan. Still, Hall's account of the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate is concise and clear.

Hane, Mikiso. *Pre-modern Japan: A Historical Survey*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1991. Print.

Much of Professor Hane's book deals with events in ancient Japan and the ornate Heian period. These early periods are beyond the scope of my paper, but I did find Professor Hane's explanation of the internal issues of the Tokugawa shogunate thorough and easy to follow.

Lambourne, Lionel. *Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West*. New York: Phaidon Press, 2005. Print.

Lambourne gives a fantastic overview of the Japanese influence in all facets of art. He addresses how the craze started, how collectors viewed Japanese art, and how the Japanese artists influenced every discipline from painting to sculpture to textiles. This catalogue is expansive—I regret that I could not get into the influence of Japanese art on decorative arts or set design. Still, this catalogue provides an excellent overview of the exchange of arts between East and West and is an invaluable resource.

Morison, Samuel Eliot. *“Old Bruin” Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry*. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1967. Print.

Morison provides good information on why the United States wanted to send Commodore Perry to open up Japan to trade, why previous expeditions failed, and why Commodore Perry, who was by some measures unqualified for the expedition (he had never seen the Pacific Ocean until 1853), succeeded. However, sometimes Morison's biography drifts into hagiography, so it is probably not the best source for a critical evaluation of Commodore Perry's life and legacy.

Napier, Susan J. *From Impressionism to Anime*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

Napier's book is a very comprehensive overview of the Japanese influence on art from 1853 to modern times, and some of her comments on Frank Lloyd Wright and Miyazaki are interesting. However, I only made use of the first two chapters of the book which deal with Impressionism. Because the book is not solely focused on Impressionism, she does not provide the most detailed account of Impressionists and Japonisme, but her analysis, while limited, is excellent.

Novotny, Fritz. *The Pelican History of Art: Painting and Sculpture in Europe, 1780-1880*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1980. Print.

Novotny briefly discusses Japonisme, but his discussion is not very thorough. The real value of Novotny's work lies in his description of the tenets of Impressionism. He discusses the techniques of Monet, Pissarro, Cassatt, Degas, and others, compares and contrasts the individual style of each artist, and look at each artist's place within art history. Novotny provides a stellar overview of Impressionism and makes it clear why it was so revolutionary in the context of art history.

“Picasso and Cézanne.” *Art Institute of Chicago*. Art Institute of Chicago, 17 February 2007. Web. 16 May 2016. <<http://www.artic.edu/picasso-and-c-zanne>>.

These are the curator's notes for an exhibit that came to the Art Institute of Chicago. The notes detail Cezanne's influence on Picasso and his feelings upon

seeing Cezanne's work. Cezanne's work was influenced by Hokusai, and it influenced Picasso. Through Cezanne, Japonisme became an integral part of modern art. The notes provide a concise summary of the relationships between the artists.

Reed, Christopher. *The Chrysanthème Papers: The Pink Notebook of Madame Chrysanthème and Other Documents of French Japonisme*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010. Print.

Reed's work discusses Pierre Loti's novel *Madame Chrysanthème*. This novel, which later served as a basis for Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly*, was also widely read by the Impressionists, especially van Gogh. The novel presented Japan as a simplistic natural paradise. The novel itself is a melodrama and presents an inaccurate version of Japan, but Reed's introduction, which places the novel in a historical and cultural context, is invaluable and explores the fascination of French society with the arts of Japan.

Robinson, Michael. *Japanese Woodblocks: Masterpieces of Art*. London: Flame Tree Publishing, 2014. Print.

Robinson provides a solid overview of the major Japanese woodblock artists. He also describes the social, economic, and political forces that influenced the times in which these artists worked. Robinson's analysis is not the most detailed I have seen, but it still provides a good overview of the history of Japanese woodblocks and the techniques used to create them.

Smith, Henry D. "Hiroshige in History." *Hiroshige*. Ed. Matthi Forrer. Munich: Prestel, 2011. Print.

Smith's essay, part of Forrer's catalogue of Hiroshige works, delves into the social, political, and economic circumstances that existed in Japan in Hiroshige's time. Smith discusses how Hiroshige's work reflected an increasingly mobile and educated society. I found Smith's discussion of Hiroshige's own travels to different parts of Japan fascinating. After reading Smith's essay, looking at Hiroshige's prints of Japanese roads is an entirely different experience.