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## **Crazy about Japan**

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## Crazy about Japan

### Japonisme in Nordic Art and Design on Display

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The large-scale art exhibition entitled *Japanomania in the North 1875-1918: The Influence of Japan on Nordic Art and Design* is touring three Nordic countries during 2016 and 2017.<sup>1</sup> The exhibition focuses on Nordic Japonisme, that is, how Nordic art and design was influenced by Japanese art. The title indicates that the Nordic countries were under the spell of a craze about things Japanese in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Acknowledging the multiple artistic influences from a number of various sources in this period, the exhibition curators nevertheless argue that no other revivalist style or outside influence has contributed to the formation of European visual arts in the nineteenth century as much as the impact of Japonisme. The American expert in Japonisme Gabriel P. Weisberg is credited as the Chief Curator for the exhibition, and the show is curated by the Ateneum Art Museum, Finnish National Gallery in Helsinki, the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo in collaboration with the Statens Museum for Kunst (National Gallery of Denmark) in Copenhagen. I visited the Japanomania exhibition in Oslo on

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Nordic' usually refers to Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland as well as the associated territories of Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and the Aaland Islands. There are no artists from Iceland or the associated territories included in the exhibition or catalogue.

September 14, 2016 with two colleagues. In Oslo, the exhibition was shown at two different venues, the National Gallery (Nasjonalmuseet) and the Museum for Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet) and organized to account for the two major streams in Nordic Japonisme: painting and graphic art at one site (image 1 is a screenshot of the gallery view on the museum website), and design and crafts at the other (image 2, also a screenshot from the museum website).<sup>2</sup>

In the preface of the exhibition catalogue, the organizers state that their aims are to examine Nordic Japonisme “as a totality”—a promise which is both daring and delightful, and sets the bar of expectation at a high standard (Weisberg et al., 2016, 7). The intriguingly ambiguous title, *Japanomania*, suggests an affirmative and passionate approach to Japanese art in tandem with a more sinister and dystopian attitude at a time when nations were formed and military power relations were part of colonial and imperial discourses around the world. Visitors to the *Japanomania* exhibition might have hoped to encounter a critical examination of the imaginaries and discourses surrounding the cultural and political exchange between the Nordic countries and Japan at a time when both regions were struggling to negotiate their role in the world. However, such socio-political contexts are not part of the curators’ foundation, and the focus of the exhibition is almost entirely on visual and aesthetic dimensions in appraisal of Nordic modernism. The overall impression is that of positive admiration: the Nordic artists and critics in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century seemed to cherish Japanese art. Wider Halén, one of the Norwegian curators of the exhibition, noted in a general remark that this is not Orientalism because they all loved Japanese art.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Japanomania in the North 1875-1918,” accessed October 30, 2016, [http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/exhibitions\\_and\\_events/exhibitions/national\\_gallery/Japanomania+in+the+North+1875-1918.b7C\\_wtjKXP.ips](http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/exhibitions_and_events/exhibitions/national_gallery/Japanomania+in+the+North+1875-1918.b7C_wtjKXP.ips).  
Editors’ note: Please refer to the appendix on pages 187–190.

<sup>3</sup> Conversation with Wider Halén on September 14, 2016. This is not the literal formulation of Halén’s remark, although to this effect.

## *Orientalism and Japonisme*

It is relevant to explore the relationship between Orientalism and Japonisme. Both concepts can be understood as an aesthetic property as well as a discourse. The concept of Orientalism as discourse derives from Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978), in which Said demonstrates how European 'Orientalists,' primarily French and British scholars, writers, travellers, and aficionados represented the Middle East in text and image during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For Said, Orientalism was about power, colonial supremacy exercised by Western countries, and the power of knowledge through the dominating epistemological foundation created through Western text and visual representation of the East (Borggreen 2006, 16-19). As James Clifford points out, Said applies a Foucauldian method of genealogy to map out the complex totality of an oppressive systematicity. Despite Said's, at times, repetitive and associative critical methods, Clifford acknowledges some of the significant findings in Said's discourse analyses: Orientalism has a structure that tends to "*dichotomize* the human continuum into we-they contrasts, and to *essentialize* the resultant 'other'" (Clifford 1988, 258, italics in the original).

Japan studies scholar Richard Minear (1980) has argued that some of Said's points are applicable to Japan. There are a number of differences between the colonized Middle East and Japan, for example, Japan was never a colony of the West, and Japan did not represent any special interest for Europeans regarding Europe's cultural heritage, elements that informed philologist and biblical studies of the Middle East. Nevertheless, according to Minear, three aspects of academic Orientalism are apparent in the discourse concerning Japan: the use of abstractions like 'European' and 'Oriental' ('us' versus 'them'); prejudice in favor of the West ('us' being better than 'them'); and a distinction between past 'Oriental' greatness and present 'Oriental' degradation.

Orientalism as an artistic genre emerged in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in close connection to European colonialism. Mainly, French and British artists depicted Middle Eastern sceneries as an imaginary representation of Orientalist fantasy such as harem settings, slave markets, or snake charmers. According to art historian Linda Nochlin's seminal text on "The Imaginary Orient" (1989), 19<sup>th</sup> century Orientalist paintings by artists such as Gérôme or Delacroix convey a number of elements that stem from colonial power structures and gender stereotypes. These elements

include an absence of history (as if the time stands still in the Orient, and there is no development or progress, in opposition to the dynamic and modernizing West), an absence of Western people (no figures of colonial masters or tourists appear in the picture, even though the entire scenery is composed for the visual mastery of the Western gaze), and an absence of ‘art’ because the motif is rendered in highly realist style as a means of ‘naturalizing’ the scenery and providing authenticity to the content of the image. Realism as style conceals the hand of the artist and provides a ‘reality effect’ that is similar to that of photography.

### *From Copy to Assimilation*

In the Japanomania exhibition, there is one overt ‘Orientalist’ painting on display, namely, the British artist James Tissot’s *Japanese Woman Bathing* (1864, image 3).<sup>4</sup> Tissot’s painting depicts a female figure dressed in a Japanese kimono draped loosely over her naked body; she poses for the painter/viewer and meets the gaze of the viewer with a coquettish tilt of her head while exposing her breasts and almost her crotch. Although she has dark hair, the woman is not of Japanese ethnicity, and resembles rather the bodily representation of numerous Venuses popular in the genre of French Salon paintings in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The woman seems to be on a veranda with flowering cherry blossoms framing the image from above, while the background reveals numerous Japanese objects as ‘stage props’ in an imaginary setting of a Japanese house. There are no Western travellers or tourists in the image, although the woman seems to pose for such a viewer, for whom her body and all the surrounding exotica are displayed as objects of desire. Moreover, following Nochlin’s argument, the painting is executed in a realist style, which leaves no trace of the artist’s hand or brushstroke visible on the surface, and instead provides a stamp of authenticity to the content through realism.

Gabriel Weisberg (2016, 19) calls Tissot a “provocateur” in his depiction of a fashionably dressed prostitute who awaits or lures the next costumer. Weisberg suggests that Tissot found the reference for such motif in Japanese woodblock prints of Edo period courtesans, for example,

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<sup>4</sup> Note on titles of artworks: all titles are the English translation given in the exhibition catalog.

Kitagawa Utamaro's print entitled *Oiran Osama of Abura House* (image 4). In the Japanomania exhibition, there is no equivalent example by a Nordic artist to Tissot's eroticism set in a fantasy version of Japan. However, there are several examples of paintings in which exotic Japanese objects appear together with female figures in sceneries of contemporary cosmopolitan environment. Following the trend in British and French painting, Nordic artists included objects of Japanese origin, such as the Japanese screen and a kimono in Anders Zorn's portrait of *The Misses Salomon* (1888), or the large parasol in Christian Krohg's image of his bohemian studio (1885).

The inclusion of Japanese artifacts was also a way of negotiating cultural identity for Nordic artists who mingled with artists in the cultural centers of Europe, Paris, and London. Anna Kortelainen's insightful essay in the catalogue explores how the Finnish Salon painter Albert Edelfelt, during his stay in Paris, appropriated the theme of a sophisticated young woman depicted along with Japanese objects in a Parisian interior as a means to negotiate his own sense of being a *dépaysé*, a displaced alien. As Kortelainen argues, for Edelfelt, "working in Paris was like being released from a distant, peripheral island kingdom on to a wide-open continent. It implied arrival at the center, casting off the role of an extra, and achieving the sovereignty of the great white hunter. The artist of that era was not burdened by the notion of political correctness; he was unabashedly and self-consciously trustful of the superiority of the West, which was merely emphasized and refined in a fresh way by distant 'primitive cultures'. In the same way, soft femininity was seen to adorn and support masculinity." (Kortelainen 2016, 107).

Artworks that represent Japanese artifacts as exotica were part of what was termed *japonaiserie*, a term coined in France in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, together with the term *japonisme* to indicate a value-based judgment of the manner in which Japanese influence was appropriated. As art historian Elisa Evett notes in her study of the reception of Japanese art in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe:

Japonaiserie is regarded as a simple-minded copying of motifs for their exotic associations or decorative appeal (implying that exoticism cannot coexist with the familiarity that comes from understanding, and that decorative appeal is a surface quality whose lack of content does not even require understanding). Japonisme is seen as involving a more profound assimilation of Japanese principles, the result of an understanding of the deeper and more abstract elements of Japanese art. Japonaiserie is generally thought to precede japonisme because japonaiserie exhibits a superficial level of initial acquaintance, whereas japonisme shows the results of fuller familiarity and understanding. (Evetts 1982, 106)

As can be seen in the subtle remark in parenthesis, Evett herself is critical of the mutually exclusive dichotomy of the two terms *japonaiserie* and *japonisme*. It may be possible to understand the construction of these two categories as reflecting the competition among European critics and collectors concerning the degree of artistic value of the Japanese artifacts that were imported. Among the thousands of objects shipped from Japan to Europe from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onward, many were high-quality artworks, but even more were cheap mass-produced export products or graphic works. In Europe, cheap Japanese bric-a-brac was available for purchase at non-art places such as department stores and teashops. Many European artists and critics in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century did not know the context and background of the Japanese artifacts, while others were eager to establish a hierarchical categorization of Japanese art in order to promote their own collection and their knowledge. The fact that anyone could buy things Japanese was part of what created the ‘japanomania’ referred to in the title of the exhibition, exemplified in a display of postcards, theatre posters, and other popular cultural visualization of imaginary Japan in the Oslo exhibit.

The Japanomania exhibition does not apply the words *japonaiserie* and *japonisme* as distinct categories, but the curators do imply the related hierarchical notions by frequent references to the distinction between “early influence” and later “assimilation.” Introducing the Japonisme phenomenon in the exhibition catalog, Gabriel Weisberg mentions a number of French and British artists that are considered part of the Japonisme wave in Europe, and he places their use of Japanese art within a scale from simple inclusion to a more complex reworking of pictorial space.

One example is a work by James McNeill Whistler, about which Weisberg writes:

The tilted foreground plane reveals that Whistler was among the first painters to go beyond the mere inclusion of Japanese objects in his paintings to thinking in terms of how space could be modified so that two-dimensional design elements would dominate the composition as they did in Japanese ukiyo-e prints. (Weisberg 2016, 15)

Many of the works included in the Japanomania exhibition are framed as a mixture of fascination with Japanese objects and modernist features, such as the re-organizing of space in the picture plane pointed out by Weisberg. Another example is the work by Harriet Backer entitled *Evening, Interior* (1890; image 5). Here, we see a female figure reading a letter with a bright light from a lamp that not only creates a distinct shadow on the wall behind the woman, but also illuminates a red and yellow paper parasol from behind, which in combination gives dynamics in the image. The spatial organization of the room is unclear, and the artist makes no attempt to hide her brush strokes. The painting, furthermore, represents one of the many female artists from the Nordic countries included in the exhibition. According to Anna Kortelainen, most Nordic female artists did not excel in the eroticized fantasy of geisha images or sophisticated Parisian ladies as many of the male artists did. Instead, female artists tended to portray a domesticated vision of Japanese artifacts in everyday situations or depicted Japanese objects such as fans and vases in still life arrangements (Kortelainen 2016, 106-107).

### ***Modernist Aesthetic Vocabulary***

Most of the Nordic artworks in the exhibition feature the notion of assimilation with respect to formal elements. Formal elements could be found in the Japanese woodblock print genre known as *ukiyo-e* that makes up the largest part of Japanese collections in the Nordic region. Formal elements include the use of bright colors, and the application of flat color fields enclosed by a significant black outline as seen, for example, in the work by Akseli Gallen-Kallela entitled *The Defence of the Sampo* (1896). Dominating properties in Japanese *ukiyo-e* such as 'flat'



figures (no attempt to render human beings or objects as three-dimensional, and no use of light-shadow effect) as well as ornamental qualities and abstraction of space in the picture plane are pointed out in regard to works by Carl Larsson, Peder Severin Krøyer, and Edvard Munch. Paradoxically, in relation to this 'flatness,' several examples in the Japonomania exhibition draw attention to exaggerated depth in the picture plane. Here, the principle of 'near versus far' is applied in combination with a compositional technique of cutting off parts of the motif. This can be seen in many Japanese woodblock prints from the late 1850s onward, especially in images by Utagawa Hiroshige in his series *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, produced between 1856 and 1859. His 'near versus far' principle is noticeable in Nordic landscape images such as Prince Eugen's painting *Leafing, Balingsta* (1891) and Eilif Peterssen's *Summer Night* (1886-87). Both of these paintings feature trees depicted in a close-up mode so that only the middle part of the tree trunk is visible in the image. The close-up tree trunks are opposed to a landscape with a lake that unfolds in the mid-range part of the composition behind the tree trunk, and the contrast between near by and far away creates a sense of spatial recession in the picture. Similar compositional principles can be seen in paintings by L. A. Ring, whose work *Alder Stumps* (1893) also displays an asymmetrical composition and an unconventional viewpoint that focuses on the reflections of the tree trunks in the water surface rather than the trees themselves.

This manner of proposing a more abstract way of organizing the space of the picture plane was combined with a rethinking of naturalism that included native plants and landscapes as well as new types of representation of natural phenomena such as a dark nocturnal sky with splashes of colorful evening clouds, or white-on-white snow-covered vistas in vertical formats. The exhibition and the catalog present the Japonisme influence as the primary factor for evoking these prominent features of the modernist aesthetic vocabulary in Nordic art.

In Oslo, the exhibition was divided into two parts, with the part focusing on design and craft on display in the Museum for Decorative Arts (image 2). This part contained works by Nordic designers and artisans such as wallpaper designs, tapestries, furniture, porcelain and ceramics, along with silverware and other metal work. Much of the Nordic Japonisme in applied arts was inspired by the British Arts & Crafts

Movement and the Pre-Raphaelites circles that had seen an affinity between what they perceived as a 'primitive' design language in Japanese art and the art forms created in the Middle Ages. The many wallpaper designs and tapestries produced by Nordic artists such as Gerhard Munthe, Andreas Schneider, and Frida Hansen point to the increasing attention to ornamental patterns as found in Japanese *katagami* (paper stencils for textile printing), lacquer ware, and ceramics. "National themes and a love of nature combined with Japanese impulses constituted a perfect symbiosis," writes Widar Halén (2016, 163).

### *Nordic and European Japonisme*

Paintings and graphic works by Nordic artists form the core of Nordic Japonisme. However, as can be seen in image 1, the exhibition was organized to contain a number of artworks by well-known European artists, who entered the Japonisme canon, including James Tissot, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Paul Gauguin, Claude Monet, and Edouard Degas (works by Degas can be seen to the left in image 1). In the area of arts and crafts, mainly British artists and designers are mentioned as influential in the Nordic context, first and foremost Christopher Dresser, but also William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and others from the Arts & Crafts Movement. Nordic artists knew (or knew of) many of the British and French artists, either from their own travels to Paris and London, or from encounters in the Nordic region, as when Claude Monet visited the town of Sandviken in Norway in 1895 and painted an image of mount Kolsaas and called it "the mount Fuji of Norway." The Nordic artists also shared the same sources of information concerning Japanese art with other European Japonists: they visited the World Fairs and Expositions in Europe (for example, those in Paris in 1878, 1889, and 1900), at which numerous Japanese artifacts were displayed, and they read the same written sources, articles published in magazines such as *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* or *Le Japon Artistique*, or books such as Louis Gonze's *L'art Japonais*.

The display of works by Nordic artists side by side with works by canonized artists from Paris and London serves to align the appreciation of Japanese art that they shared. It suggests an intra-European bonding between artists from various European cultural sites in their common

pursuit of Japanese artifacts and their practice of exoticizing and assimilating elements *à la Japonais* in their own works. In fact, it seems that this alignment of cultural and national identity among European nations was much more important for the Nordic artists than any kind of relationship with Japan. Nordic artists were not interested in Japan as such, but constructed an imaginary 'Japan' as a mirror against which they could associate themselves with the cosmopolitan centers of Europe. The references to European models of Japonisme are so plentiful in the Japanomania exhibition that the direct influence from Japanese art in the Nordic examples becomes less obvious. In some cases, such as the graphic works by Edvard Munch, there are visually convincing parallels with specific Japanese woodblock prints, but since Munch never revealed his sources of inspiration, there is no proof (Nordkvelle 2012, 32). This raises the fundamental question of whether the term Japonisme is still applicable.

An imaginary 'Japan' as a mirror for national identity resembles the kind of Nordic Orientalism identified by the literary scholar Elisabeth Oxfeldt in her study of Danish and Norwegian literature in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (2005). Oxfeldt points out how the new Nordic nations struggled to position themselves in the world. Conscious of their own position as periphery in Europe, the Nordic artists were eager to align themselves with the large European nations by the process of 'Othering' non-Western cultures, including China and Japan. Oxfeldt argues that the Scandinavian cosmopolitan imagination in relation to European centers was constructed in terms of nationalist interest. Denmark, for example, had colonies, but cultural Orientalism did not pertain to a direct relationship between Denmark and its colonial other. Rather, after the defeat to Germany in 1864, Danes would define themselves in opposition to Germany and align themselves culturally with France. Oxfeldt proposes a complex model of how "European countries on the periphery—in the case of Norway and Denmark—imported Oriental imagery to position themselves not against their colonial Other but rather in relation to central European nations" (Oxfeldt 2005, 13).

### *Aesthetic Approach*

Somehow, the disregard for a contextualization common among Nordic artists and collectors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century manifested itself in the Japano-

mania exhibition's own structure and display. After entering the exhibit at the Oslo National Gallery, the visitor would encounter a golden 6-panel screen from Japan in a Kanō school style of landscape, featuring peonies growing next to a pond and engulfed in golden clouds. This can be seen in the right hand side of image 6, which is a screen shot from a 360 degree view from the museum's website. Above the screen is a row of Japanese-style paper lanterns hung across the space. Both of these objects, the folding screen and the paper lanterns, represent the kind of Japanese artifacts that were imported to the European market and reproduced in numerous of the Nordic artworks in the exhibition. The screen and the lanterns would hereby provide a setting or an atmosphere for the visitor, somehow suggesting the mood of Japanomania that existed among Nordic artists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the same time, the juxtaposition also reveals a lack of contextualization for the Japanese artifacts: in Japan, golden screens were part of an interior design to be placed on the *tatami* floor as a means of dividing or screening off parts of a larger room in the homes of wealthy merchants or military elite. Paper lanterns, on the other hand, were objects for outdoor use, hung at shrines during festivals, at temporary market stalls, or on party boats on the Sumida river, and often inscribed with the name of a tea house or shop as advertisement. In other words, in the Japanese historical context, golden screens and paper lanterns had significantly different cultural references, and did not exist in the same space. Such lack of context most likely reflects the conditions for Nordic artists and collectors during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, none of whom had ever travelled to Japan, and whose knowledge of Japan was based on written accounts by European writers and art collectors, many of whom had never been to Japan either.

As can be seen in images 1, 2, and 6, a number of Japanese artworks were included in the exhibition, and they were hung on the wall or placed in the showcases in between the works by Nordic and other European artists. The works of Japanese origin seem to serve a double function in this regard: they provide the artifactual documentation of the kinds of material that Nordic artists and aficionados collected in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, while also offering a visual reference to some of the compositional or stylistic elements that Nordic artists assimilated during the same period. However, the present day curators have not done much to update the lack of context. Their emphasis seems to be on

aesthetic appreciation, and this inclination manifests itself in the exhibition design, for example, in the dark greenish-blue color on the wall of the National Gallery space, modeled on the color Peacock blue. Why this color? Peacock blue is not particularly associated with Japan (Japanese artists such as Katsushika Hokusai used Prussian blue). It may suit the blue color of the peafowls and the brocade framing of one of the Japanese paintings on display (seen in the niche with other Japanese artifacts in image 1). As for other works of Japanese origin, the name of the Japanese artist is not stated, and the work is merely identified as “Peacocks, kake-mono, Japan, 19<sup>th</sup> century, water color on paper,” a gift from Siegfried Bing to the Danish collector Karl Madsen.

### *Disregard for Modern Japanese Art*

It is in a way ironic that Karl Madsen owned a Japanese painting executed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Karl Madsen was an artist-turned-collector and museum director, who had stayed in Paris for a number of years during the 1870s and was well acquainted with the collector and art dealer Siegfried Bing. Not only did Madsen establish his own collection of Japanese art in Denmark, he also published the book *Japansk Malerkunst* (Japanese painting) in 1885.<sup>5</sup> The book was widely read by Danish and Norwegian artists with an interest in Japanese art, and several of the small illustrations that adorn the pages throughout the book were copied onto various types of Danish applied arts, such as porcelain products from the Royal Porcelain Factory. To dedicate an entire book to the topic of Japanese painting from classical art to the present day seems to signify admiration and enthusiasm for Japanese art, and indeed many passages in Madsen’s book praise the aesthetic approach of Japanese artists, especially in the representation of natural elements. As Madsen’s writes: “It is in the creation of plants, birds and small animals that the Japanese painters are at their best. Here they are perfect, unique and second-to-none masters.” (Madsen 1885, 34). Japanese craftsmen “have made a decoration which as none other is ardent and witty, rich on clever and delightful ideas, inexhaustible on amusing and splendid surprises” (ibid., 16). Madsen’s affirmation is amply identified in the Japanomania catalog text by Malene

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<sup>5</sup> All following translations from Danish are by the author.

Wagner, who points out the various influences of Madsen's book and his other Japonist activities. However, what is left out of the narrative is that Madsen was actually not that admirable of Japanese art in general. At some point in his book, Madsen makes this sweeping generalization about the lack of dynamics in Japanese art history: "there has been a development, that cannot be denied, but it has taken over one thousand years to drag itself to the position the art of painting occupied just before the revolution, and several times it has come to a stand-still" (Madsen 1885, 58). Further, Madsen constructs an 'us vs. them' discourse, in which Japanese artists are described using a terminology that values their artistic practices lower than that of Western artists. Reflecting the aesthetic values of modernist art and the notion of the individual genius in Western art, Madsen points out that in Japan "the trace of each artist's individuality is in general weak and unclear," and that the Japanese artists "have their heads too full of authorized models and cannot form their personality as freely and independently as their colleagues in Europe" (Madsen 1885, 59). It is also clear that Madsen has no admiration for Japan's modern art; he ends his book with a rather degrading sentence concerning the present status of Japanese painting: "Japan's national art of painting, in certain ways, the flower of the entire Orient's visual arts, has come to an end, and the future will hardly call it to life again. The conditions for its existence have been brought to the grave." (Madsen 1885, 155). Madsen, along with many other European artists, critics, and collectors of Japanese art, resented the modernization of Japan that took place at the time; they wished for Japan to stay in a pure, innocent, and 'primitive' state of civilization.

### *Hinting at a Political and Historical Context*

Widar Halén's reference to the nationalism inherent in Nordic Japonisme is one of the few remarks in the Japonomania catalog that comes close to discussing Japonisme in the broader political and historical discourses of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Halén 2016, 163). Only on the final page of the catalog do we get a glimpse of another image of Japan when Harri Kalha, in his text on Japonisme in popular postcard imagery, mentions the national propaganda inspired by the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-1905. It was during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the concept

of 'Yellow peril' was coined, signifying another type of fantasy about Japan based on the European fear of a new military power. Japan was itself a nation under formation during this period, and anxiety affected the mutual imaginaries between East and West a lot. As a modern nation, Japan negotiated similar issues of national identity as the Nordic nations at the time. Future chapters of Nordic Japonisme may perhaps include such social and political themes to contextualize the topic of aesthetic and cultural appreciation.

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## Appendix



Image 1: View of Japanomania exhibition at the National Gallery, Oslo. Screenshot from 360 degree view of the exhibition at the museum website: "Japanomania in the North 1875-1918", accessed October 30, 2016, [http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/exhibitions\\_and\\_events/exhibitions/national\\_gallery/Japanomania+in+the+North+1875-1918.b7C\\_wtjKXP.ips](http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/exhibitions_and_events/exhibitions/national_gallery/Japanomania+in+the+North+1875-1918.b7C_wtjKXP.ips).

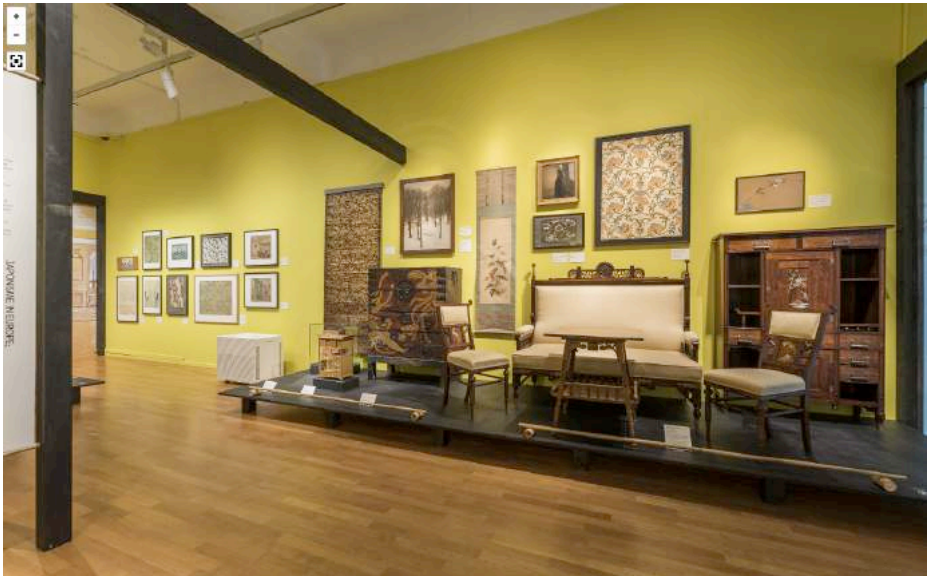


Image 2: View of Japanomania exhibition at the Museum for Decorative Arts, Oslo. Screenshot from 360 degree view of the exhibition at the museum website: "Japanomania in the North 1875-1918", accessed October 30, 2016, [http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/exhibitions\\_and\\_events/exhibitions/national\\_gallery/Japanomania+in+the+North+1875-1918.b7C\\_wtjKXP.ips](http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/exhibitions_and_events/exhibitions/national_gallery/Japanomania+in+the+North+1875-1918.b7C_wtjKXP.ips).



Plate 3: James Tissot, *Japanese Woman Bathing*, 1864, oil on canvas, 208 cm x 124 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon. From the National Gallery press material.



Plate 4: Kitagawa Utamaro, *Oiran Osama of Abura House*, undated, woodcut, 38,3 cm x 25,6 cm. Ateneum Art Museum, Helsinki. From the National Gallery press material.



Plate 5: Harriet Backer, *Evening, Interior*, 1890, oil on canvas, 54 cm x 66 cm. Bequest of Lalla F. Hansen, The National Museum, Oslo. From the National Gallery press material.

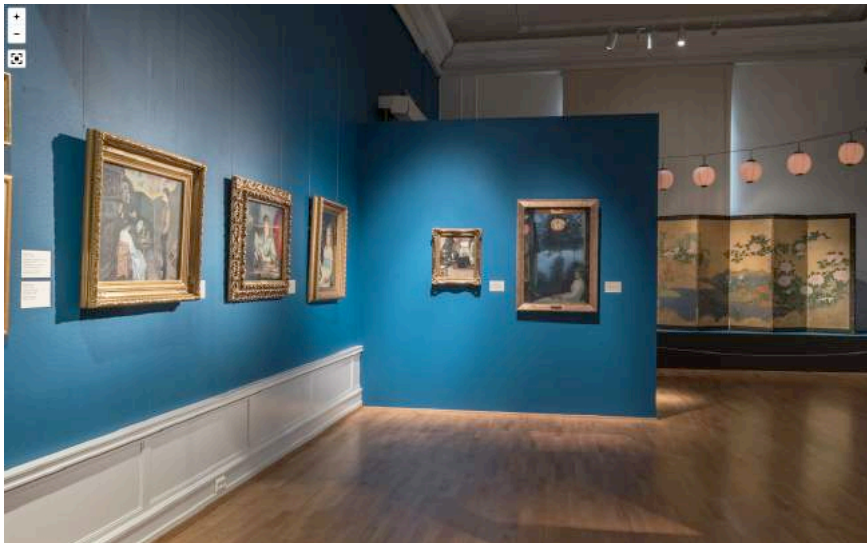


Plate 6: View of Japanomania exhibition at the National Gallery, Oslo. Screenshot from 360 degree view of the exhibition at the museum website: "Japanomania in the North 1875-1918", accessed October 30, 2016, [http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/exhibitions\\_and\\_events/exhibitions/national\\_gallery/Japanomania+in+the+North+1875-1918.b7C\\_wtjKXP.ips](http://www.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/exhibitions_and_events/exhibitions/national_gallery/Japanomania+in+the+North+1875-1918.b7C_wtjKXP.ips).



