NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FINE ART PRINTMAKING

'WHERE EAST MEETS WEST'

An investigation of the symbiotic influence of Japonisme on France and Westernisation on Japan, through a discussion of the work of Claude Monet and Kuroda Seiki

by

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will investigate the phenomenon of Japonism in Europe as well as the simultaneous effect of Westernisation on Japan and it's society in the latter half of the nineteenth century. I plan to illustrate these points through an investigation of two artists of the time, the French Impressionist Claude Monet and the Japanese painter Kuroda Seiki. Monet was one of the main exponents of Impressionism and an avid collector of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints; influence of Japanese technical elements can be traced through his work. Kuroda Seiki was an artist trained in the academic mould in Paris in the late nineteenth century. On his return to Japan he wished to introduce a new Western-style painting aesthetic to his native Japan.In analysing the work of these two artists I aim to explore the cultural connotations associated with this symbiotic influence on the cultures of France and Japan.

Japan was a closed country to the rest of the world prior to 1868. In this year the Tokugawa Shogunate adopted a policy of increased trade and contact via the port of Nagasaki where a number of Dutch and Chinese merchants were allowed to dwell. The restoration of the young Emperor Meiji (1868), however, heralded the begining of the dramatic changes which transformed Japan from a backward looking feudal country to a modern industrial nation. From 1868 onwards Japan was seized by a frenzy for everything Western. To be percieved as 'Western' was to be civilised. Aspects of Western culture were imitated with eagerness. Initially the rapid pace at which Japan was changing made it seem as if all the indigenous customs and traditions were being wiped out and forgotton: social customs, science, literature, politics, communications and transportation were all transformed in this period.

These rapid changes were the calculated aim of the government of the time. The Charter Oath of 1868 was issued by the Government outlining their aims for Westernisation. Article 4 of the Oath stated that the 'evil customs of the past shall be broken off'; while article 5 outlines how 'knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule' (Scott Morton, 'Japan it's history and culture', p150). This Oath prescribed an emphatic break with the past and was excuted with extreme diligence.

The Japanese people thus became aware of Western fashions in dress and style, habits and customs. Women learned how to use the new sewing machines to turn out Western style dresses with large bustles. The Emperor was even induced to eat beef to overcome a Japanese prejudice against the meat which derived from Buddism. In literature there was a great demand for translations of Western works while modern novels written by Japanese writers depicted the new and daring behaviour associated with Western practices

On the other hand Japanese *Ukiyo-e* prints and artefacts were enjoying a great vogue in Paris. Japonism is a generic word used to describe the influence of Japanese material culture on the Western world. In this instance the term describes the effect of Japanese *Ukiyo-e* on European Art and artistic taste. While some people thought that this movement was shaking the foundations of artistic taste, others like Edmond de Goncourt, saw that 'Japonism was in the process of revolutionising the vision of the European peoples' and that brought to Europe 'a new sense of colour, a new decorative system and a poetic imagination in the invention of the object d'art, which never existed, even in the most medieval or renaissance pieces' (Edmond de Goncourt, 'Memories de la vie litteraire' Vol 3, p334) . The influence of Japanese art undermined all illusionistic representation and opened up new prospects for the creation of a new visual reality, a truly modern style.

This decisive shift in taste followed the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris arising from which Japanese products, seen in the Japanese pavilion, enjoyed great popularity. Kimonos, fans, lacquer cabinets, tea-caddies and folding screens could all be obtained as originals or French adaptations sold cheaply in the Paris department stores. Oriental dance groups were very popular in society, operas, travel books and novels on Japanese themes all set in the 'Land of the rising sun' enjoyed great demand. Indeed, the importation of Far Eastern decorative objects and their imitation on a massive scale ensured that 'every society lady had her Salon Japonaise (Klaus Berger, 'Japonisme in Western painting' p 7).

CHAPTER ONE

The reception of Western practices in Japan after the 1868 Meiji Restoration and the simultaneous reception of Japanese artefacts in Europe.

CHAPTER ONE

The effect of the influence of the West on Japan and the corresponding effect of Japan on Europe was extremely different in each case. This chapter investigates the extent of this reciprocal influence on the two cultures.

In Japan the inflitration of the education system was of primary importance. This presented an opportunity to bring about a basic and permanent change in the attitude of the Japanese towards modernisation. In 1871 a ministry of education was established based along Western lines. The French system was adopted first, introducing compulsory elementary education for boys and girls. Later more liberal ideas based on the Amercian model were introduced. Various universities were set up by the Government, for example in 1869 the Tokyo University and in 1897 the Kyoto University were established. In these institutions, the highest value was placed upon the good of the nation as a whole, while the development of individuality through education was accorded a lower place. Schools, therefore, became a means of official indoctrination for the Government. This new Western style of education was vastly different to traditional education practices. Previously artisitc skill, for example, was handed down through elaborate networks of teachers and artistic family lineages. Oral instruction and learning by imitation were the norm. The relationship between the *shinso* (teacher) and the *deshi* (pupil) was an extremely close one, particualrly that of the *shinso* and the *uchi-deshi* (inner pupil) who lived in the masters home and often ended up as a son-in-law through marriage or adoption.

The new western-style art education which continued after 1868 made no provision for the genre of art which was popular before the opening of the country. The *Ukiyo-e* was the term given to that genre and the first references to it appear in Japanese literature around the 1680's (Ukiyo means floating transient world and e means pictures, hence pictures of the

floating world). The scenes depicted by the artists of the *Ukiyo-e* were that of actors and scenes of the Kabuki drama and of the *geisha* (prostitutes) of the Yoshiwara district of Edo. There was a great demand from the merchant class of Edo for such images. A new sub-culture had developed around the affluence of this new merchant class. Due to the feudal structure of Japan social climbling was impossible so the merchant's wealth was subsequently squandered at the theatre and the 'greenhouses' of the Yoshiwara. The colour prints provided a vivid mental image of features, costumes, characters, plots and scenes of the performances. Prints of women and famous beauties engaging in everyday activities were very popular. The most popular feamle subjects were the *geisha*, indeed prints were often bought as a reminder of the time the merchants spent there. The production of sexually explict 'pillow books' for the merchant claas became a genre of the *Ukiyo-e.* Prints inspired by lenendary and historical stories, occupations and customs of the time and landscapes were also rendered by the *Ukiyo-e* artists.

The *Kabuki* theatre was entirley popular in conception and dramatised traditional legends, historical events, stories and plays with satirical or socially critical messages. The *Kabuki-za* (theatres) combined dramatic, often stylised acting with song and dance, *Jidaimono* (historical pieces) and *Sewamono* (plays on oridnary life) interspersed with musical performances, dancing and various tricks were the main subjects of the *Kabuki*. The theatre in its earliest form was a popularised, vulgarly choreographed pantomine. It was performed by travelling groups of women who divided their time between the stage and the brothel. This form of *Kabuki* was banned in 1629 for being immoral . It continued, however, at first acted by boys then men who also acted the female roles.

The theatre was built on several levels each with corridor to promenade,as well as shops and restaurants thus making it a social as well as a cultural experience. The actors were members of families who were traditionally linked to the theatre, prominent members of

urban society, arbiters of fashion and taste in artistic matters generally. The print artists of the time portrayed the Kabuki and it's actors due to it's popularity with the merchant class. The theatre management realised that the prints were good for business and sold them at the kabuki-za and often commissioned print firms to design posters, hand bills and programmes. The highly stylised prints shared important qualities with the gestural and formalised acting of the Kabuki actors. The prints even influenced set designers and some actors tried to develop a certain characteristic pose, knowing it would appeal to the print artists hoping to achieve immortality in print form. (See fig).

The other most popular form of entertainment in Edo were the 'greenhouses' of the Yoshiwara. The *geisha* provided an inexhaustible supply of motifs for *Ukiyo* artists. The *geisha* who dwelt in the 'green houses' varied in reputation, physical attributes and accomplishments. All round entertainers they made love, sang, told stories, played music, danced and performed the tea ceremony.

Government censors permitted the print artists to chronicle and dramatise the activities of the 'green houses' who produced stylised portraits of the *geisha* often with names and addresses. Even tourists could buy the prints as a reminder of a memorable performance. Many masters of woodblock print specialised in portraits of *geisha* which were sold in series of *bijine* (pictures of beautiful women). Women were often shown in mundane, domestic situations to give a sense of intimacy. Significantly, artists rarely attempted to capture a likeness preferring to treat them as stereotypes.

From 1868 onwards, under thoroughgoing Westernisation, the government's commitment to *Bunmei Kaika* (civilisation and enlightenment) had a major influence on the art education of the time. The *bijitso gakko* (technical art school) was set up in 1876 as part of the main Tokyo University. It was Japan's first official art school. The regulations stated that the facility was

established 'to improve various crafts by promoting the application of modern European techniques to traditional Japanese methods' (Shuji Takashina, 'Eastern and Western dynamics in the development of Western style oil painting during the Meiji era', Paris in Japan, p 22). The school, set up under the *Kobusho* (ministry of industry and technology) was another opportunity to further the national goals of fostering industry and promoting production. In this institution art was simply given a supporting role in the government's plan for the importation of Western ideals. As mentioned earlier traditional Japanese art was literally ignored to the extent that the regulations of the school also stipulated that 'only Westerners be appointed as instructors and within the school both staff and students shall adopt the Western mode in all things relating to clothing, meals and living quarters' (Shuji Takashina, Paris in Japan, p 23). The Technical Art School was a vehicle for, and a product of, the utilitarian Westernising ideals that motivated the builders of early Meiji Japan.

In contradiction, while the East sought the ways of the West, the West in turn brought tradition back to the East. A sentiment of traditionalist revivalism began to take hold in Japanese artistic circles after the 1880's. This was due to the influence of one Ernest Fenollsa (1853-1903), who arrived in Japan in 1878 (two years after the establishment of the *Bijitso gakko*) originally to teach political economy. He was also an art aficionado who had studied drawing and oil painting in Boston. At the time of his arrival Fenollsa know almost nothing about Japanese culture and, as might be expected, he actually conferred with artists such as Takahashi and Yuichi on ways to foster Western style art in Japan.

In 1880 Fenollsa went to Nava and Kyoto where he saw some ancient Japanese art. He felt that it was unsurpassingly beautiful and possessed stylistic elements which he thought could be traced back to Grecco-Buddhist or the Gandharan art of North India and Pakistan as well as the art of ancient Greece and Rome. Fenollsa's theory was that ancient Japanese art was a distant heir to the classicism of ancient Greece; he singled out the Kano school for praise as he saw it

to be the most orthodox and legitimate heir to the legacy of classicism, and this was what he wanted to revive. He was sharply critical of the *Bunjinga* (popular style based on Chinese and Western principles. In a famous lecture in Boston (1882) he spoke of how he considered that 'true painting' was lost and from 1884 he applied himself to the revival of that ' true painting'. He held exhibitions and lectures on old paintings and formed the Kangakai (painting appreciation society) to discuss and appraise works of art.

In 1887 Fenollsa and his colleague Okakura Kakuzo were appointed to the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (a new traditional style painting section of the University). The two men travelled the major European countries and found that there was 'nothing at all that Japan should adopt' (Shuji Takashina, 'Paris in Japan', 1987). The school itself comprimised of three departments; painting, sculpture and crafts and was designed to promote traditinal Japanese techiniques. The students worked on *tatami* mats and their uniforms were imitation attire of the Nava period (710-794). At this school Fenollsa hoped to achieve a fusion of traditional Japanese techniques to achieve a modern style.

Simultaneously, the influx of Japanese *Ukiyo-e* prints into Europe generated much interest in artistic circles. It was even thought that 'Japan was the stage prop of Impressinism' (Meir Graefe, 'Vincent Van Gogh', p77) yet others felt that the art of Japan had a lot in common with the art of the time. In a letter to his son Lucien (Feb. 1893) Camille Pissaro wrote about a Utamaro-Hiroshige exhibition he had seen at the Durand-Ruel Gallery with Monet:

> "the show is really astonishing and is admirably arranged with little rooms of faded rose and pistachio-green. It is exquisite and the prints are wonderful. It is an artistic event..... Damn it all if this show doesn't justify us! There are grey sunsets which are the most striking instances of Impressionism" (John Rewald, C Pisarro: letters to his son, Lucien, p206).

The Impressionists tried to capture the look of the fleeting moment, they neglected the compositional aspect of their painting to describe atmosphere. They developed the broken

paint surface and the use of loose flickering brushwork. Although compositional looseness and the use of broken surfaces used to describe mood were absent from Japenese prints, the Impressionists were moved by Japan and were convinced that there was an intimate relationship between the *Ukiyo-e* and what they were attempting.

Pissaro believed that the Japanese had anticipated their discoveries in some way:

> "Hiroshige is a marvellous Impressionist. Monet, Rodin and I are enthusiastic about the show. I am pleased with my effects of snows and floods; (John Rewald (Ed), 'C Pissaro: letters to his son Lucien', p 207)

Emile Zola shared Pissaro's opinion, as he thought that:

> "all this is the achievement of the Impressionists - a precise investigation of the sources and effects of lights, which have equally influenced drawing and the rendering of colour. It has been rightly held that they have taken as their example Japanese graphics which today are so widely distributed". (E Zola, 'Salons',p 242)

CHAPTER TWO

Kuroda Seiki and Western style painting, Monet's exposure to and use of Japanese technical influences.

CHAPTER TWO

By the turn of the century in Japan art training could be recieved in the basic skills of western style painting. In 1893 Kuroda Seiki returned to Japan after spending the previous nine years studying in Paris. Born into a wealthy family, he studied French as a young man in Tokyo and,in 1884,he went to Paris to study law. While in Paris Kuroda's friend Fuji Masazo (1853 - 1916) wanted to study under Raphael Collin, an academic painter, yet could not speak French so Kuroda interpreted. His long standing interest in art was aroused and he abandoned his law studies and took up painting full time. Collin took on Kuroda as astudent. They began Kuroda's training by doing charcoal sketches of classical sculptures in the Lourve. He soon mastered the elemental techniques of painting and began painting in earnest.

One of Kuroda's first works to be displayed in Japan was 'Morning Toilette' (1893, fig 1) which depicts a nude woman looking at her reflection as she does her hair. The work caused an outcry. Some critics found it pornographic, some unbecoming, some daring yet few found it beautiful. Traditionally in Japan when figures were sculpted or painted they

were idealised and in virtually all cases were clothed. The printed debates over the artistic and moral connotations of the representation of the naked body continued for some years to follow.

Through his work Kuroda was attempting to introduce to Japan a revolutionary new genre which he termed 'idea painting'. His paintings were intended to manifest the visual realm percieved in the mind of the artist precisely as if it existed in reality. They reflected, in essence, the historical and conceptual works considered to be the pinnacle of the concepts of the western art academies.

When the Japanese were exposed to western-style painting they were struck by its near photographic realism. So the main current of western-style painting in Japan took realism

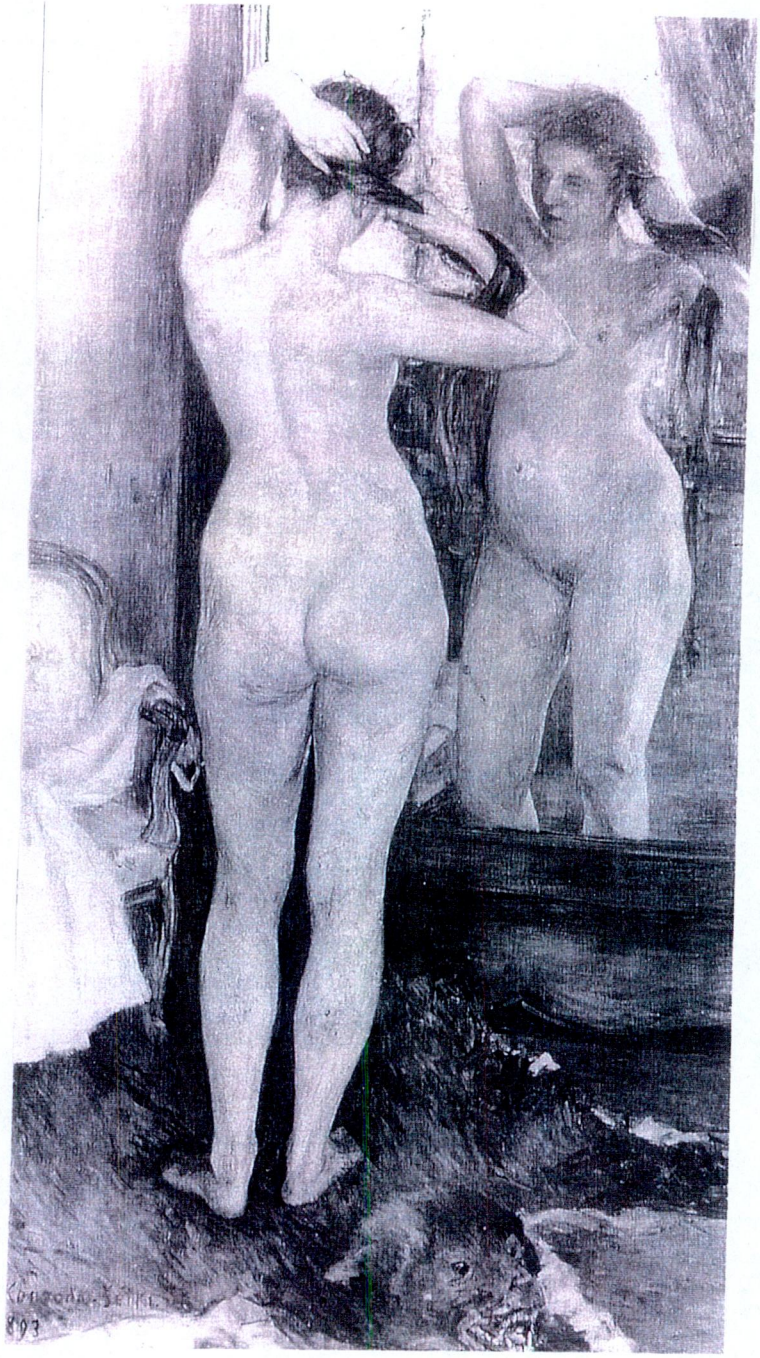

Fig 1: Morning Toilette, Oil on Canvas, 1893, Kuroda Seiki.

as it's goal and artists became engrossed in trying to reproduce their subject matter as naturalistically as possible. Kuroda thought that this painting was a preparatory stage for his 'idea painting'. He felt that the true realm of western style painting lay in taking realistic painting a step further, to a point where the artists conceptual ideology and an ideal visual world, could be expressed in large compositions.

The large scale work 'Telling of an Ancient Romance' (1896, fig 2) was Kuroda's first attempt at this new genre. He exhibited at the third White Horse Society exhibition (1898, Toyko), yet reviews were not favourable. Kuroda himself said of the work that from his 'deep devotion' to this work which he had hoped to make a total success, he experienced only 'repeated failure and disappointment' (Yomiuri Shinbun, 1898). He accounted for the failure of the painting as originating in a lack of appropiate colouring and perspective. While his compositional arrangment was praised he was criticised for leaving the viewer with a 'vaguely unpleasant sensation' (Emiko Yamanshi, 'Paris in Japan', p184). It has been stated that the reason for the de-emphasis of perspective was because of the decorative nature of the work and that it was 'regrettable that the artist shows traces of his struggle to make use of realism' according to the observations of the Bijutsu Hyoron magazine.

It was thought that Kuroda's artistic goal, his technical style and artistic aptitude did not unite in his work. The painting was judged less persuasive thna his works based on actual scenes which revealed both technical skill and persuasive sentiments. Another 'idea painting' to be publically exibited was 'Wisdom, Impression, Sentiment' (fig 3), a set of three nude female studies symbolically posed on gold-leafed canvas. He exibited it at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universalle where he won a silver medal. When it was shown in Japan, however, it did not receive favourable reviews. Viewers could not understand the association between the title and the poses, or what the nude figures symbolised.

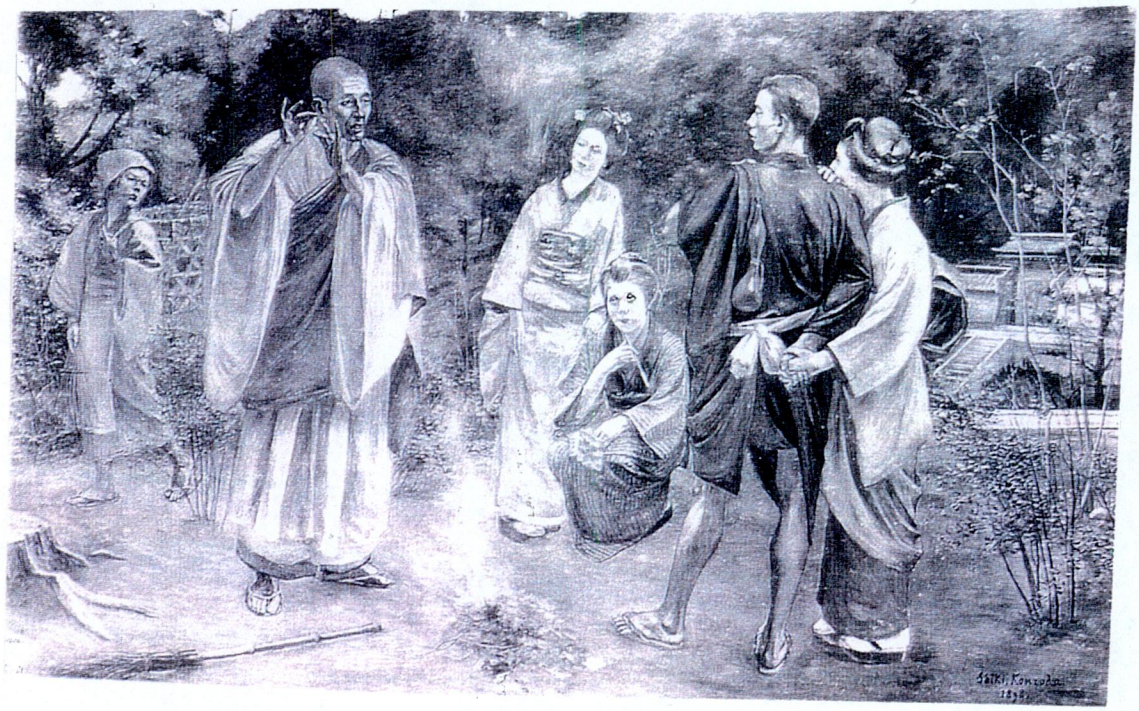

Fig 2: Telling an Ancient Romance, Oil on Canvas, 1898, Kuroda Seiki.

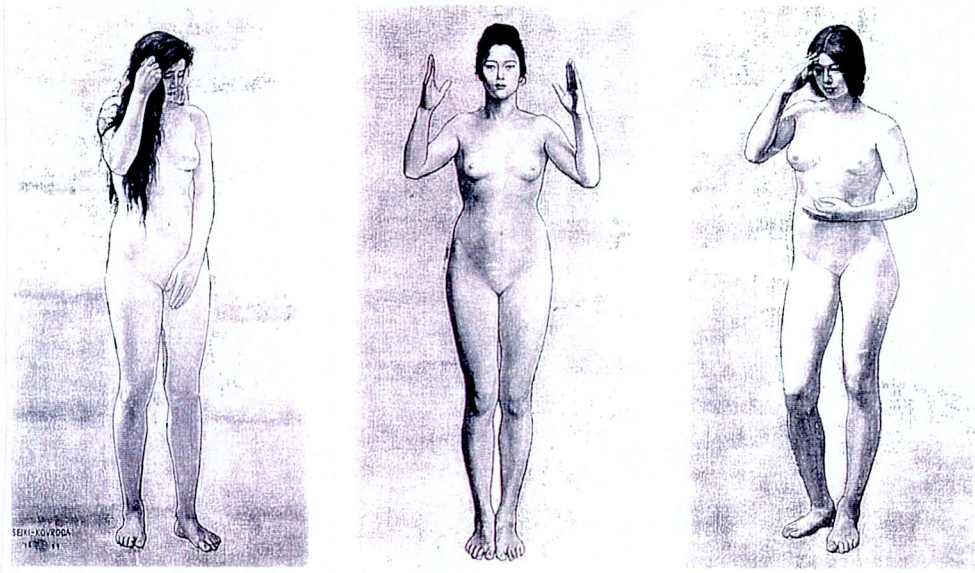

Fig 3: Wisdom, Impression, Sentiment, Oil On Canvas, 1899, Kuroda Seiki

In the 'Flowering Field' (1907, fig 4), another of his 'idea paintings', the women's hands and legs, and the fur laid on in the centre of the piece are all roughly sketched and the work could be accounted for by a few possibilities. Either Kuroda felt that he had gone as far as he could go with the work or that he had intended to add more to it but was prevented by circumstances. It may also be possible that the 'sketchy' quality of the work was cultivated as a modernist statement. It is also surprising that Kuroda should have undertaken such subject matter at this time in his career as of all his works this piece is closest to the style of Collin, Kuroda's mentor; in fact it is very close to Collin's 'three women in a green field' (1895, fig 5). Collin's major motifs were nude or clothed women as symbols of intangible elements such as 'time'. Kuroda originally concentrated on nudes and portraits of women, but his style was markedly different from Collin's in terms of form and colour preferences and in that he strove for an ideal work in his painting. It is said that Kuroda's motivation in making this work was that he was attempting to impart artistic direction to the *Bunten* exhibition (established in 1907), which was designed to become the 'salon' of Japan, by having this work exhibited as an example of his 'idea painting'. in 1916, however, Kuroda criticised the *Banten* saying that his countrymen were lacking the talent to create great 'idea paintings'. He later realised, from his repeated failures, that his artistic character was not well adapted to 'idea painting'.

Conversely, Claude Monet (1840-1926) was influenced by the wave of Japonism which hit Europe at the end of the nineteenth-century. Monet was one of the earliest and subsequently most enthusiastic collectors of *Ukiyo-e* prints. He was trained as a naturalist in so far as he dealt with that aspect of painting which stressed the artist's visual interpretation of the world. In this naturalism he sought to portray a 'truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world based on meticulous observation of contemporary life' (Linda Nochlin, Realism, p 13). Contemporary urban life was for Monet a stimulating sensory phenomenon, as were landscapes and nature. His orientation was towards the verification of facts based on empirical observation. According to Joel Isaccson, his primary instrument was his eye which was

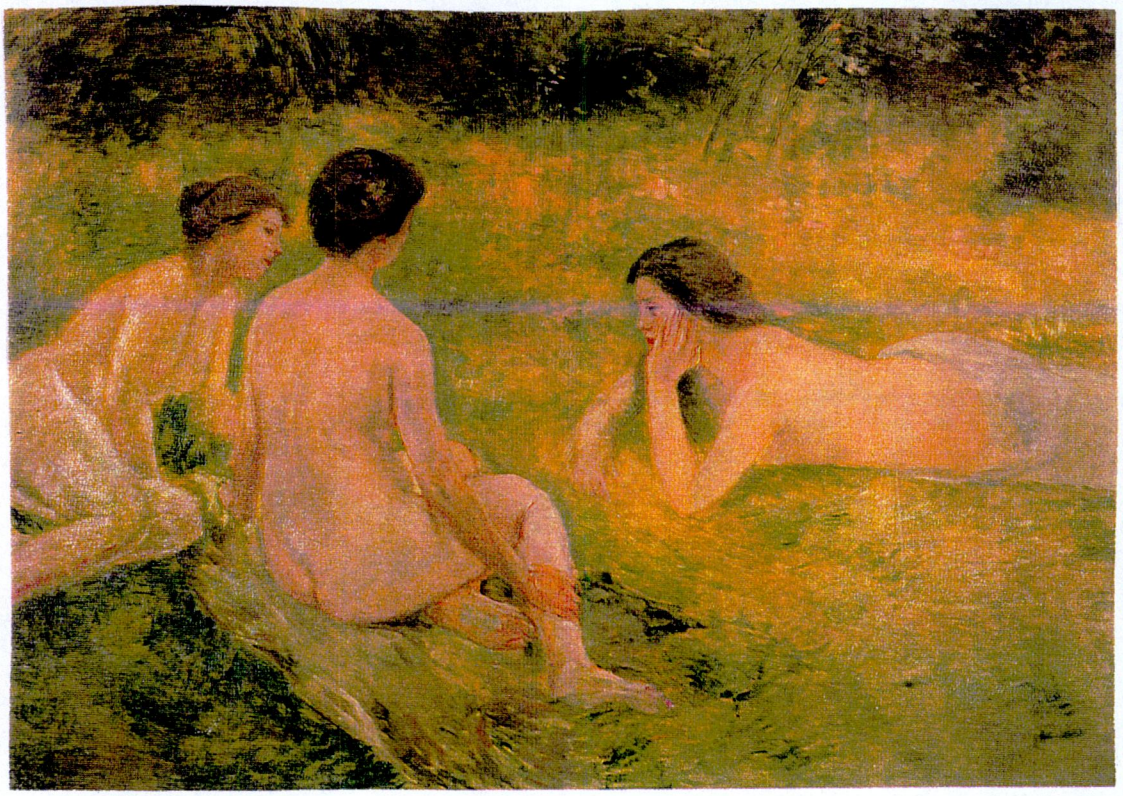

Fig 4: Flowering Field, Oil on Canvas, 1907, Kuroda Seiki

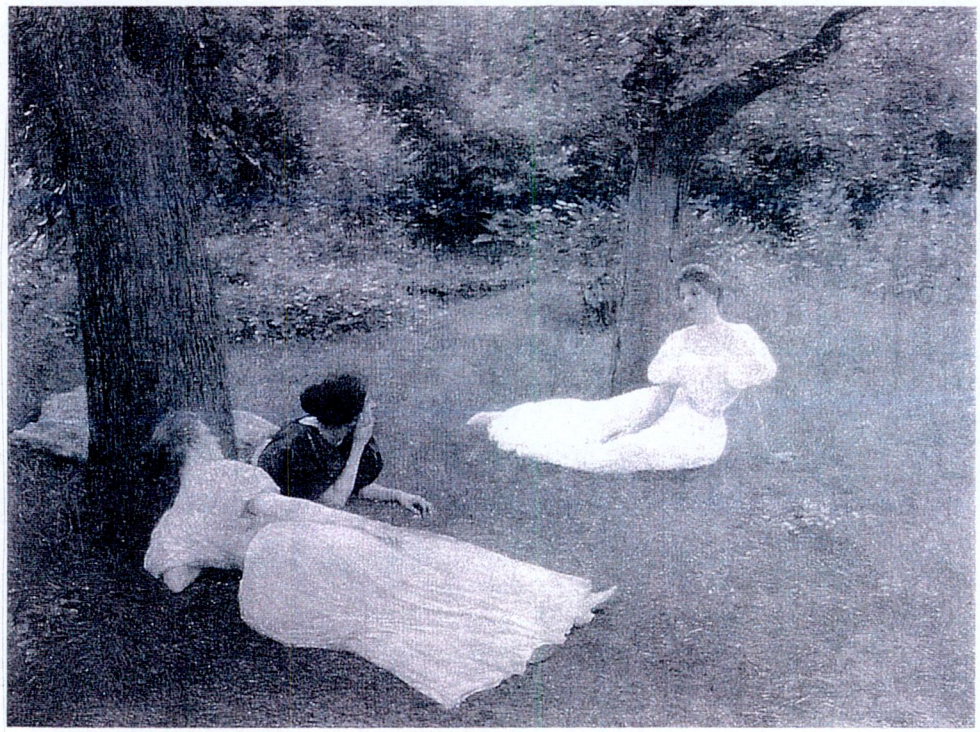

Fig 5: Three Women in a Green Field, Oil on Canvas, 1895, Raphael Collin.

guarded by a mind that 'reached out, probed, questioned and tested what he saw' (Joel Isaccson, Aspects of Monet, p 17). His work was concerned with knowing how to see, a ceaseless experimentation with observation. Monet was less interested in the theory of art or the interpretation of the old masters, for him, the world of visual experience dominated the world of thought and tradition. Cezanne's reference to Money as 'only an eye but what an eye' seems to grasp the essence of this artist.

Monet first came across Japanese prints in La Harve during his youth, where one shop was using them to wrap cheese. Monet was completely enamoured by the *Ukiyo-e:*

> "Their refinement of taste has always pleased me and I approve of the implications of their aesthetic code: to evoke presence by means of a shadow, the whole by means of a fragment" (R Marx, Maitres d'hier et d'aujourd 'hui, p 292).

It was the brilliance of the colours and the everyday character of the subjects of the prints as well as their evocativness that Monet admired. As early as 1871 Monet was painting landscapes with flat areas of bright colours which owed something to Japanese prints and their stylistic elements and techniques. These works were executed during an extended trip to Holland where he added more *Nishike-e* to his collection (Nishike means a brocade, a metaphor for sumptuousness hence Nishike-e or brocade picture means a sumptuous ploy-chromatic print).

Monet's 'La Japonaise' (1876, fig 6), a full length portrait of the painter's wife Camille dressed in a blonde wig and an elaborately patterned kimono, posing on a background of massed fans was cited by Meir Graefe in support of his opinion that Japonism was the 'stage-prop' of Impressionism (Meir Graefe, Vincent van Gough, p 77). This work is the most conspicuous example of Monet's love of Japanese objects and decorative arrangements; it was a significant break with the principles that usually governed his work. He usually chose a

Fig 6: La Japonaise, Oil on Canvas, 1876, Claude Monet.

contrived. The floor is covered with similar fans hanging in a bizarre scheme that led one critic of the second Impressionist exhibition (1876) to comment on the 'incomprehensible miracle of equilibrium' which made it seem as if they were hanging in mid-air (William C Seitz,'Monet',p 104). Monet usually gave considerable attention to atmosphere yet the space of this work is airless and devoid of Impressionist qualities. Although the pose of Camille may be derived from the *Ukiyo-e* prints of the Yoshiwara *geisha* in reality the resemblence to the orient is quite superficial.

The painting was,however, an immediate success and it sold for 2,000 francs. When in 1918 a guest informed Monet that it had been resold for 150,000 francs he replied that the buyer had been sold 'une salete' (trash). 'La Japonaise' was Monet's last use of exotic props in his work,preferring to make more subtle use of Japanese technical elements.

'La Rue de la Bavoille a Honfleur' (1864,fig 7) displays a use of these subtle technical inflences. Monet employed the use of an extended line of perspective trailing off between the two lines of the houses. Hiroshige's 'Saruwakw-cho' (fig 8) from his one hundred views of Edo seris could be held up as an example of the techniques employed by Monet.

Monets 'La Terasse a sainte-adresse' (1866,fig 9) shows traces of Japanese influence. Stylistically the work lies on the border line between a free perceptual realism and Impressionism. The grey-blue sky is flatly painted which recalls the *Ukiyo-e,* while the bright green-blues of the sea are laid in with freer brush strokes. Against the backround profiles of sailboats and ocean-going vessels appear as thin silhouettes. The use of the strong contrasts of bright colours, the elevated viewpoint, high horizon line and *geisha*--like pose of the female in the piece all suggest Far Eastern influence.

Fig 7: La Rue de la Bavolle a Honfleur, Oil on Canvas, 1864, Claude Monet.

Fig 8: Sarunaka-cho- From one hundred views of Edo, Polychromatic Print, 1823-32, Hiroshige.

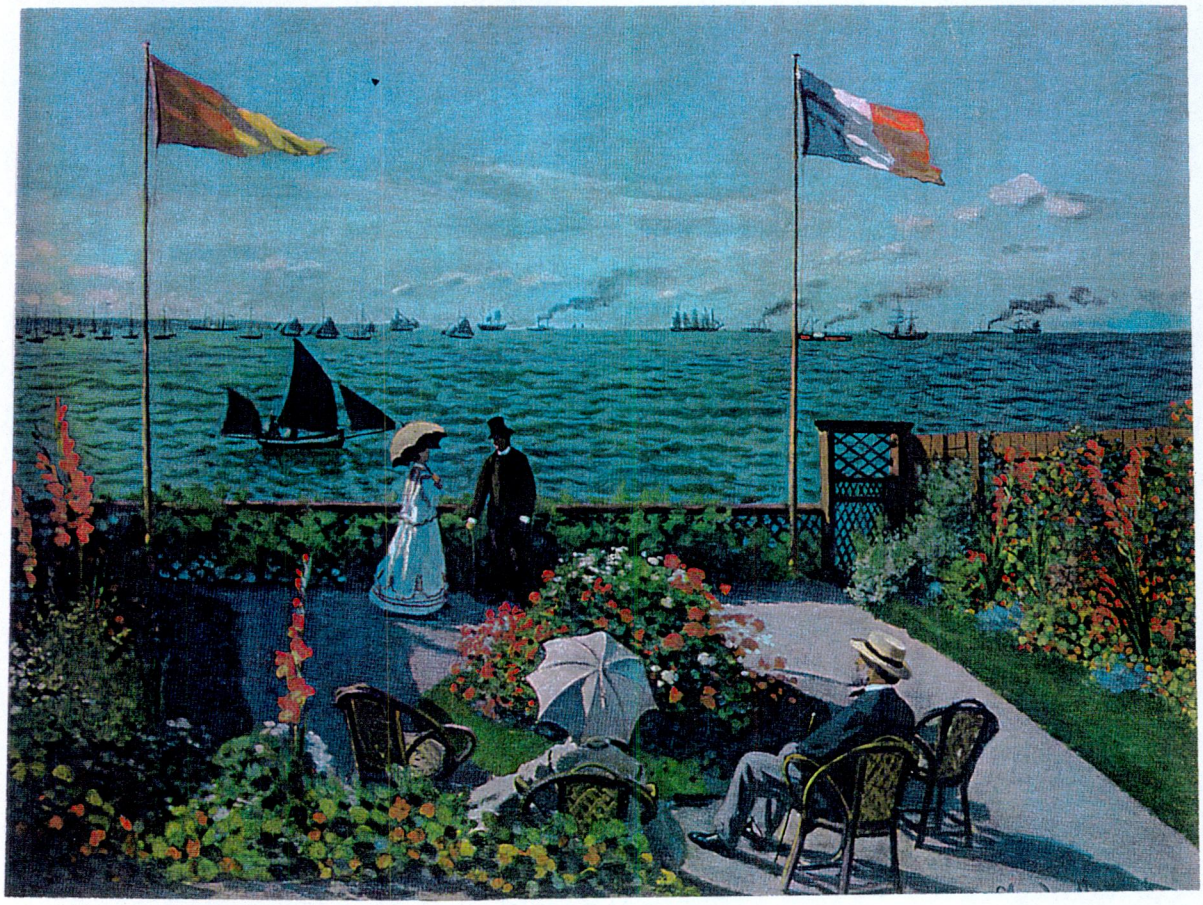

Fig 9: La terasse a saint adresse, Oil on Canvas, 1866, Claude Monet.

The 'Femmes au jardin' (1866-67,fig 10) was actually painted on the spot from nature, a very radical development at this time. The work proved to be difficult for Monets contemporaries. He had recorded the true effect of outdoor light on the figure without the slightest regard for traditional methods for modeling flesh or drapery. The flat rendering of the fabric of the girls dresses and their *geisha*--like poses recall the *Ukiyo-e*. Monet intended for this work to be the ultimate naturalistic painting.

The influence of Japan is essential to an understanding of Monets 'Poplars' seris. They represent a culmination of his interest in the orient. He had admired the bold unmodulated colour of the *Ukiyo-e* and was intrigued by their comparative flatness, compositions, lack of chiarascuro and subject matter.

Monets belief in the intuitive, spontaneous character of Japanese art is an appropiate reference point for his poplars ('Poplars on the Epete', 1891, fig 11). He was particularly enamoured with the work of Ichiryusai Hiroshige (1797-1849). When exhibiting the works he chose only to exhibit the poplars so that he would have a totally harmonious enviornment for the works. In so doing he wanted to emphasise the decorative character of the seris and this layout was designed to confirm his versitility, inventivness and sensitivity to natural effects. The style of the works embodied inherent French qualities as well as elements of an oriental style. The poplar possessed a high degree of decorative elegence and due to the strict linearity of the trees he could emphasise its abstract qualities in addition to drawing attention to the beauty of the countryside and reafirm the values of close contact with nature. When Monet chose to paint those trees he felt that the poplar was a motif rich in historical references, was personally appealing and typical of rural France.

From 1871 onwards Monet lived in the village of Argenteuil. He then moved to Giverney in 1883 and rented a house locally which he purchased in 1890. It was there he built his

Fig 10: La femmes au jardin, Oil on Canvas, 1866-7, Claude Monet.

Figure 11: Poplars (wind effect) plate 40, Oil on Canvas, 1891, Cluade Monet.

famous water lily garden and for the last twenty years of his life he devoted an enormous ammount of his time and money to floral and landscape projects. When Monet purchased the land the pond was rarther small and he intended to construct something 'for the pleasure of the eye and also motifs to paint' (Paul Hayes Tucker, 'Monet in the ninetys' , p269). Monet gradually enlarged the pond to approximatly 1,000 square meters which was ringed by an arrangement of flowers, trees and bushes crossed by a Japanese style footbridge. This pond, as we know from his paintings was filled with water lilies. Monet's land consisted of two gardens: a traditional western flower garden and a more eastern water lily garden using a more natural lay-out and quiet reflective waters. The Japanese bridge (fig 12) and foliage also marked it as oriental.

In 1899 Monet turned to the pond to create a seris of eighteen views of the surface and footbridge (twelve of which he exhibited at the Durand - Ruel gallery between Nov. 22nd and Dec. 15th, 1900). It has been said that in his water lily seris Monet was trying to highlight 'the need to suibmit to the primacy of nature and the obligation of the artist to evoke the regenerative powers and decorative beauty of nature' (Paul Hayes Tucker, 'Monet in the nineties', p 279). It is thought that through the use of the Japanese bridge and water garden, which mark the images as eastern, he sought to provoke an association with the East. He felt that France could take guidance at this time from the Japanese deep engagement with nature, suggesting that this allowed them to operate on a higher level of awareness and made them a 'profoundly artistic people' (Stuckey, 'La jardin de Claude Monet', p 244). The visual associations with the east would have made viewers realise that Monet was able to incorporate aspects of this foreign culture and adopt them to his own use. The footbridge is very similar to structures that appear in Japanese prints such as Hiroshige's 'Wisteria' (fig 13). Monet's treatment of his bridge , however, is quite different to Hiroshige's. Where Hiroshige employs an impossibly high arch and flattened forms Monet places his weighter structure in the center of his scenes and his forms are

Fig 12: Water Lili Pond (Japanese Bridge), Oil on Canvas, Claude Monet.

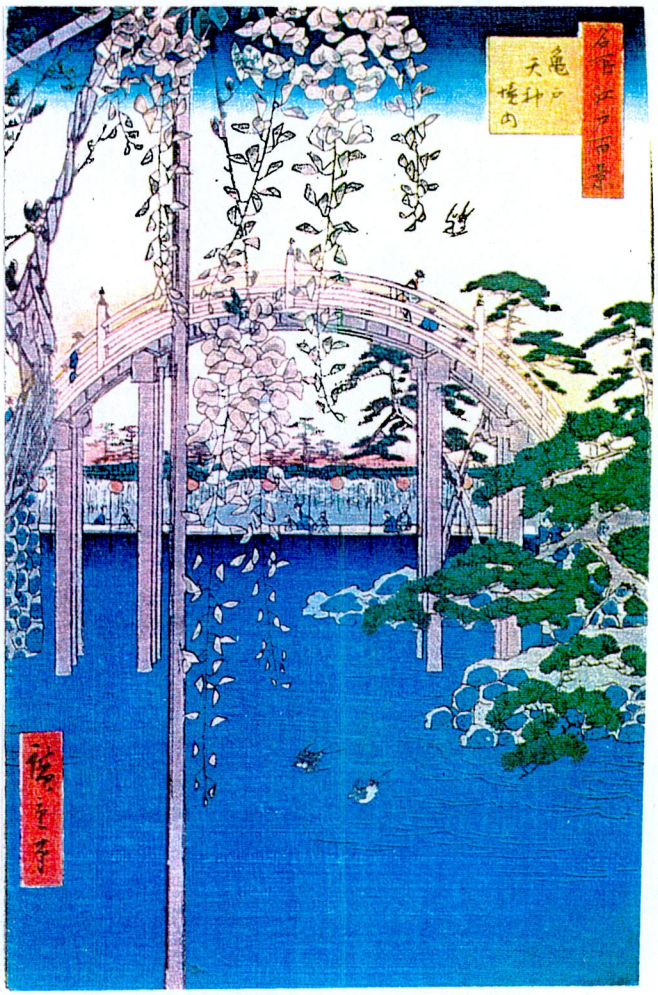

Fig 13: Wiesteria, Polychromatic Print, 1823-32, Hiroshige.

quite realistic. His colour scheme is very European with the use of yellows, reds and greens. Paul Hayes Tucker suggests that in these images Monet was attempting to suggest the existance of a :

> "hybrid enviornment, a place where East meets West through the powers of French culture and where nature becomes art through the tenacity of an Impressionist's vision" (Paul Hayes Tucker, 'Monet in the nineties', p 280)

CHAPTER THREE

The connotations of France and Japans exposure to the other: the 'exotic' orient and blind Westernisation

CHAPTER THREE

On his return to Japan Kuroda, amoung others, set up private classes for tuition in western - style painting for young Japanese artists. Three years after his return he was appointed director of the newly established western painting section of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. Western painting was becoming popular again and was enjoying Government support and patronage. The corrses on offer at the school were based on the experiences of Kuroda, while he was in Paris, and were both thorough and rigorous and in the traditional European mould. In their first year, students learned t o sketch from plaster casts of sculptural works. The second year was devoted t o sketching from living models using charcoal, and in theri third year they were shown the techniques of oil painting, and made copies of other works. In fourth year the students proceeded with their own work.

Many, if not most of the painters who were to assume the major roles in the development of modern art in Japan, attended this school, where they learned the basis of their craft. It was in the years after they graduated that many of the artist's own personal responses as working artists to the academic tradition emerged and matured.

Some students, however, came to realise the nature of the complex interplay between the assumptions taught in class and the evidence of their own eyes. One student, Koide Narashige (1887-1931), was often told by Kuroda that 'the shadows cast by objects, because of the nature of the lines of light involved, appear purple' (Takashina, 'Paris in Japan', p27). Koide felt that Kuroda's statement represented not an observed truth but merely a subtle artistic and technical understanding and was concerned that he may have to something that he could not see. As individual freedom of artistic inquiry developed, artists questioned Kuroda's teachings, yet he had helped

to initiate the movement toward a viable position for Western style oil painting in Japan. His accomplishments served as an inspiration and point of departure for many artists.

Through his methods of teaching and his 'idea paintings' Kuroda's ambition was to transmit the concepts of Western Academism to Japan. Paradoxically, academism at that time had lost favour in Europe. Even Collin's work illustrated the fact that academic painting itself was undergoing major transformations. Collin's 'Floreal' (1886, fig 14), for example, shows a slight Impressionist influence not only in the use of colour but also in composition. He employs an elevated viewpoint, at human eye level, which was widely observed since the Renaissance, thus opening the way for a new emphasis on the picture surface. In paintings such as 'Flowering Field' (1907, fig 15) Kuroda used stylistic features he had learned from Collin - he may have been unaware that his art could have represented the re importation into Japan of those distinctive elements of Japanese art that crossed over to Europe earlier in the nineteenth-century.

When Kuroda visited Paris it was the end of the nineteenth century when, not withstanding the establishment of the avant-garde and even proto-modernist developments, official art was still closely linked to the academic tradition. Artists from Japan tended to evaluate the Paris experience in terms of training in subject matter, style and technique as being of paramount importance. Kuroda purposely tried to bring back to Japan a codified body of skills that could be taught to younger Japanese artists who in turn would be able to compete with westerners based on mutually accepted perceptions of international standards applicable to all.

Having removed themselves from the Chinese cultural orbit the Japanese found that the establishment of new European perspectives cut ties with mainland Asia and much of the Japanese past. Some merely found that the past was outmoded yet others tried to reformulate elements of Japanese past experience to make them more modern and thus more closely

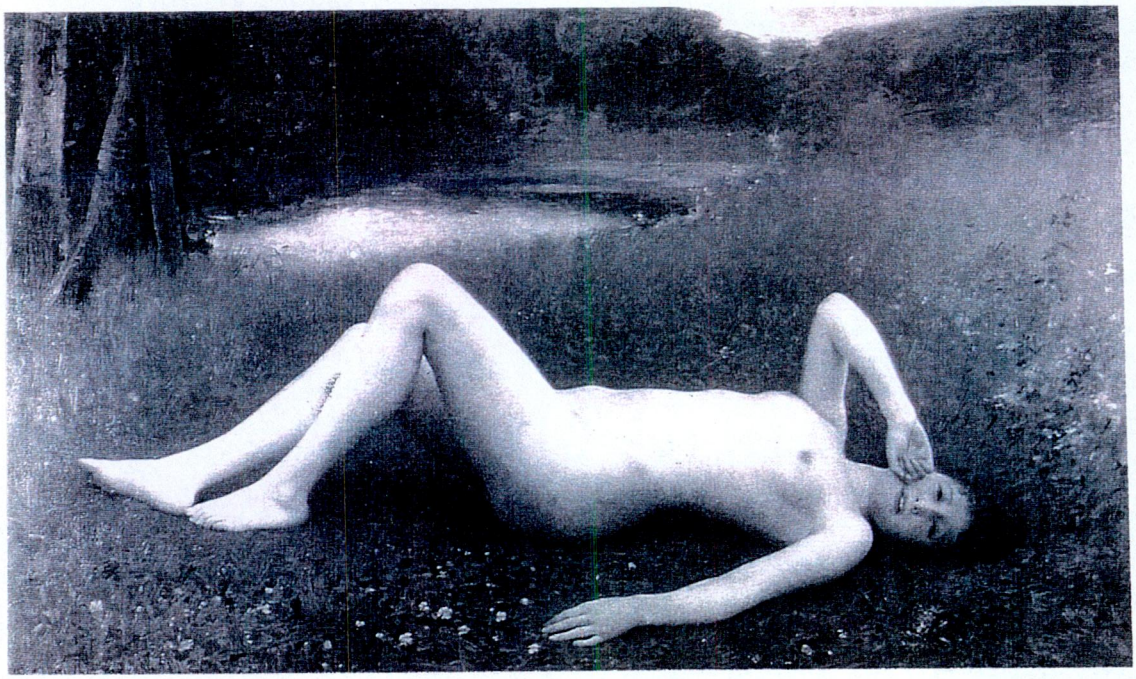

Fig 14: Floreal, Oil on Canvas, 1886, Raphael Collin.

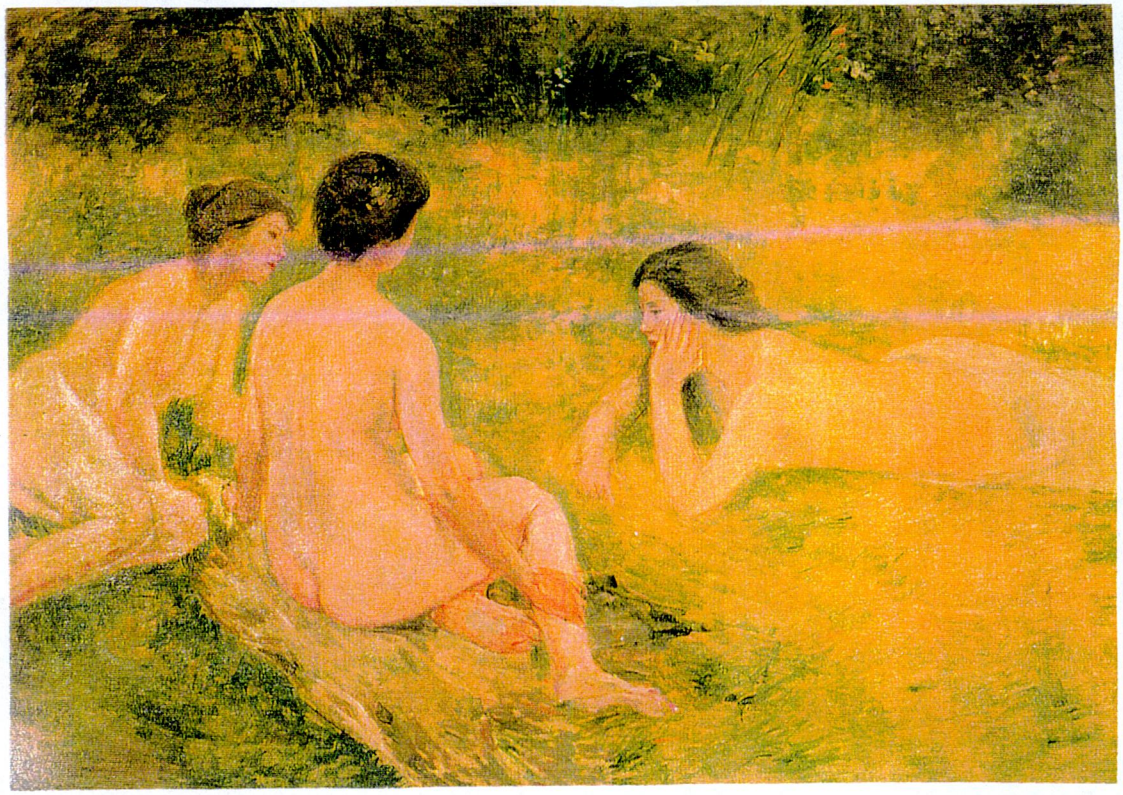

Fig 15: Flowering Field, Oil on Canvas, 1907, Kuroda Seiki.

oriented towards western values. The assimilation of new western theories into Japan's conciousness proved to be a struggle between different and conflicting patterns of allegiance

Western art of the time placed a great deal of importance on the artist as individual, the authentic individual statement: the painter's potential genius lay in his difference from others. This new indivualism was , for Japanese artists, a different test than for the artists of Europe. Only two or three decades after the introduction of western techniques and ideals, as embodied in the concepts of academism, the artist now had to rebel against them. Kuroda had created a modern tradition ofwestern painting that had endured for fifteen to twenty years until a number of artists felt confident to go beyond it.

The effect of Japonism on Europe prompted a different set of responses from European society than Westernisation had in Japan. The European love affair with Japan derived in part from a longing for the 'exotic', the 'other', for distant shores and strange lands. The exotic meant escapisim for some and inspiration for others. These two elements can still be said to be a part of western culture to the present. In both cases the exotic orient was part reality, part nostalgic fantasy. Edward Said describes the concept of orientalism as a search for missing or repressed elements of a cultural conciousness. According to Said this was representative of the subconcious longings and desires of western society. He explains that in order to govern subject peoples westerners viewed orientals as instinctive, irrational. intuitive, child-like, lazy, cunning and feminine. Westerners percieved these qualities as the to thenselves yet they were attracted to it. According to Said:

> "the orient constitutes the primeval theatre of dream, the major heiroglyph of our unconcious, it also represented the great collective fantasm of Western culture which pretends to discover in it , with horrified fascination all that it has itself repressed" ('L'Academisme et se fantasime', p 74)

When Japan was officially opened to the world rumours of vastly differing sexual customs and the docile, submissive behaviour of Japanese women , the *geisha* and the nude, public bathing of men and women were interpreted in the west as evidence of lax sexual morality. Westerners professed themselves as horrified yet were obviously titilated. Sir Rutherford Alcock, in his journals chronicaling his stay in Japan (1863), wrote that :

> "Japan is essentially a country of anomolies where all- even familiar things - put on new faces and are curiously reversed..... the utter confusion of the sexes in the public bath houses making that correct which we in the west deem so shocking and improper, I leave it as I find it ,a problem to solve."

John La Farge, in his book 'Bric - a - Brac', an artist's letters from Japan' (1897), characterises the Japanese as possessing a 'childlike sincerity' which was considered lost in the post medieval west. For him Japanese painters were ' pictures of the simplicity of attitude in which we were once children'.

Sir Alcock and La Frrge's views on Japan form the main consesus of Japan by they west, as being immoral, yet virtuous. In this way, the *geisha* and public baths shocked, yet the craftsmanship of Japanese printers and artists could be admired as confirming the ideals of the Arts and Crafts movement. The Japanese were considered in tune with nature, in their art and their lives. John Ruskin and William Morris, theoreticians and innovators of the Arts and Crafts movement, who propgated the idea that people's lives must be in tune with their art admired the Japanese. They saw them as being a close link to medieval European artisans. The tradition of artistic linegages in Japan 'validated the dignity of the individual worker' (Hosely, 'The Japan idea', p48). This view was part of the west's longing for a happier existence free of all the disruptions and social dislocations of modern industrial society.

CONCLUSION

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In conclusion, it may be noted that the extent of the simultaneous influence on both France and Japan, from exposure to the other differ drastically in both cases, as can be observed in my examination of Kuroda and Monet's work. The *Ukiyo-e* prints provide a rich source of new and exciting possibilities for artists. It is noted that European painting in the late nineteenth-century was moving towards an increasing simplification of form, an atempt to release painting from its reliance on the 'real' world, to speak directly of subjective experience, through the use of pure colours and froms. the art and the influence of Japan was one of the many factors which led towards these develooments in European painting. In the overall scheme of art, the *Ukiyo*-e prints were a subtle and exotic injection and contributed significantly to a new way of seeing. Furthermore, the features of Japanese prints provided radical inspiration to western artists, intent on modernising the art of their time.

The art of Japan was effected in an extremely different manner. The Government's totalitarian patronage of western painting had many far-reaching consquences, pertinently illustrated by the reception of Kuroda and his teaching. His attempt to trnsfornm completly the art of Japan through the introduction of alien and foreign principles and ideals was not entirely sucessful.Japanese artists soon caqme to realise the shortcomings of his approach and rebelled against it. Even more alarming was the fact that before Kuroda's influence an American, Fenollsa, was able to dictate the currnet artistic taste in Japan. Having learned about traditional Japanese art,Fenollsa drew hie own illusions to a legacy of classicism and imposed hie ideas on the art education of the time.

Japan took to western culture on a grand scale. They adopted the dress, education, art and social customs of the west; ignoring their own cultural heritage, for a while it seemed as if they were totally consumed by western culture.France, on the other hand,was effected to a

much smaller degree. French society was infatuated with the decorative objects of Japan which became a current in fashion. People purchased these objects eluding to their evocative, mysterious beauty partaking in some subconscious longing for the 'exotic.'

The opening of Japan by the Meiji restoration of 1868 had major connotations for both East and West : the west being infused with a sense of wonder and curiosity about a mysterious, strange culture, the East, coming out of isolation, eager to incorporate all elements of a new, seemingly more developed, civilised culture. That one event and the developments that followed form the fabric of both cultures to this day.

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