

JAPONISME JAPAN AND THE BIRTH OF MODERN ART

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Japonisme

Japan and the Birth of Modern Art

After more than 200 years of self-imposed isolation from the West, Japan was forced by the United States to open its borders to international trade in 1854. This resulted in an influx of Japanese commodities into Europe and the United States and triggered a veritable revolution in Western art and design.

The influence of Japanese art on Western artists was called Japonisme, and the classical period of this movement, which extended from the late 1850s to the 1890s, was associated with Impressionism and Fauvism on the Continent and the Aesthetic Movement in England.

Early practitioners of Japonisme copied exotic motifs across media before gradually engaging more deeply with Japanese art, adopting innovative compositional devices, exploring new subject matter and embracing Japanese art's profound respect for the decorative arts. Out of this arose Art Nouveau, a radical rethinking of design across all media, which flourished until the outbreak of the First World War and marked the beginnings of modernism.

Japan

Noble lady's carriage and a flower cart

Goshoguruma

early 18th century

left screen from a pair of six panel folding screens: ink, gold paint, pigments on gold leaf on paper, lacquer on wood, silk, brass, copper, paper

Purchased, 1994

AS13.a-1994

Pierre Bonnard

France 1867–1947

Screen: Nannies' promenade, frieze of carriages

Le Paravent: La Promenade des nourrices, frise de fiacres

1895

colour lithograph on 4 sheets of paper
edition of 110

Purchased, 1946

1587.1-4-4

Pierre Bonnard, a leading figure in the French Nabi movement, was given the nickname 'le Nabi très Japonard' (the ultra-Japanese Nabi). His enthusiasm for Japanese art is shown in the simplified, decorative design and flattened space of these lithographs in the format of a folding screen, like those imported into Europe from Japan in great numbers in the second half of the nineteenth century. The screen's subject matter – a family crossing the Place de la Concorde, Paris watched by a gaggle of cloaked nursemaids – also reflects the interest in women and children seen in Japanese woodblock prints.

Utagawa Sadahide

Japan 1807–1873

Western traders in Yokohama transporting merchandise

1860

colour woodblock

Purchased, NGV Asian Art Acquisition Fund, 2014

2014.276

By the 1860s, Yokohama was a bustling international port with ships arriving from Russia, Britain, France, Holland and the United States. Sadahide depicts this new era of cultural exchange with acute observation. An American ship loads cargo from smaller boats while women watch from the ship's bow and the cabin of a nearby French ship. Details of the lavish interior of a Russian ship to the right are visible through its rear windows. In the distance is a Dutch steamer and a British sailing ship with its rigging full of sailors.

Utagawa Yoshikazu

Japan active c. 1848–70

Americans in Benten Street from the famous places in Yokohama series

1861

colour woodblock

Purchased with funds donated by the Hon. Michael Watt and Cecilie Hall, 2018

New acquisition

Utagawa Yoshitora

Japan active c.1850–80

English ladies

from the *Pictures of people from foreign countries* series
1861

colour woodblock

Purchased with funds donated by the Hon. Michael Watt and Cecilie Hall, 2018

English ladies depicts two women wearing large crinoline dresses that are essentially European in style. The woman in the front is holding a peacock feather fan, a nod to Japanese exoticism. The presence of Western women in Japanese trading ports was rare in this early period and may account for the facial features appearing more Asian than European in appearance.

New acquisition

Collecting Japan

Japanese goods began arriving in Europe in the late 1850s, ranging from bric-a-brac such as fans, kimonos and parasols, to works of art including ceramics, lacquerware, bronzes and woodblock prints. The first significant public display of Japanese art occurred in London at the International Exhibition of 1862, where the Japanese Court was furnished with decorative wares collected by Sir Rutherford Alcock, Britain's first consul general to Japan. The 1862 exhibition marked the beginning of a craze for all things Japanese and subsequent world's fairs in Paris, Vienna and the United States heightened the West's enthusiasm for Japonisme, with the Japanese pavilions among the most popular.

This enthusiasm for Japanese art was manifested in artists' studios and the domestic interior of fashionable homes, with folding screens, hanging scrolls, lanterns, porcelain vases and ebonised furniture depicted in paintings of the period. Women were often included in such painted settings in languorous poses, dressed in kimonos and often shown studying Japanese prints.

Japan

Dish

c. 1888

porcelain, enamel, lacquer, gilt

Purchased, 1889

2113-D1A

Japan

Bowl

c. 1880

bronze, silver, brass, pigments

Purchased, 1880

2038-D1A

Japan

Lidded box with flower baskets, birds and flowers

Hanakago to kachōe zu futatsuki hako

c. 1880

lacquer on wood, gilt, gold paint, metal, shell

Purchased, 1880–81

2004.a-b-D1A

In 1880–81 Melbourne staged its first international exhibition, where manufacturers from around the world displayed their wares to a public eager to keep abreast of international taste. The Japanese Court contained numerous stands and displays showcasing the breadth of Japanese art and industry. Manufacturers focused on traditional arts and crafts, such as this lacquered box in *maki-e* (powdered gold decoration) lacquer with inlaid metal and shell decoration, which cleverly gives the illusion of being two distinct boxes. Such works, as with much of what was on display in the Japanese Court, were produced specifically for the Western export market.

Japan

Cosmetic cabinet

c. 1888

gold paint, pigments and lacquer on wood, gilt

Purchased, 1888

2012.a-e-D1A

Japan

Fan

late 19th century

paper, bamboo, metal

Collier Bequest, 1955

1497-D4

Japan

Fan

late 19th century

paper, bamboo, lacquer on wood

Collier Bequest, 1955

1491F-D4

Bernard Hall

England 1859–1935, lived in Australia 1892–1934

The studio shrine

c. 1910

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1935

247-4

Arthur Streeton

Australia 1867–1943, lived in England 1897–1919

Tambourine

1891

oil on tambourine

The Joseph Brown Collection. Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004

2004.221

Felice Beato

Italy 1832–1909, lived in Europe and Asia 1853–90

Stillfried and Anderson and The Japan Photographic Association Studio

Japan 1877–85

No title (Street musicians)

c. 1868, 1877–80 printed

albumen silver photograph, colour dyes

Purchased, 2001

2001.858

Felice Beato was an early war photographer who lived and worked in Japan from 1861 to 1884, documenting aspects of the country and its culture. After arriving in Yokohama, Beato established one of the earliest photographic studios in Japan and developed a successful business in studio portraits, landscapes and documentary images of local people and their daily lives. By 1868 he had published two albums, *Views of Japan* and *Native Types of Japan*. These albums included images delicately hand-coloured by local Japanese artists and were produced specifically for Europeans fascinated by the life and customs of this little-known country.

Felice Beato (attributed to)

Italy 1832–1909, lived in Europe and Asia 1853–90

No title (Samurai warrior)

1860s–70s

albumen silver photograph, colour dyes

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Thomas Dixon, Member, 2001

2001.193

With the end of feudal shogunate rule and the rise of the new Meiji government in 1868, the role of the samurai warrior had come to an end. Despite these fundamental changes in Japanese society Western photographers were keen to document historical aspects of Japanese culture. While geishas and scenes of women bathing proved an ongoing source of fascination, it was actors dressed in samurai costume, priests and sumo wrestlers which dominated male subjects for photographers. Such staged images were produced specifically for the curious Western market.

Felice Beato

Italy 1832–1909, lived in Europe and Asia 1853–90

No title (Maiko)

1866–68

albumen silver photograph, colour dyes

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of
The Herald & Weekly Times Limited, Fellow, 2001

2001.6

The beginnings of Japonisme in France

The passion for Japanese art first emerged in Paris. Some of the earliest collectors were leading artists and cultural figures, including writers Edmond de Goncourt and Émile Zola, art critic Philippe Burty – who coined the term ‘Japonisme’ in 1872 – and painters Édouard Manet and Edgar Degas.

Japanese woodblock prints captivated Europeans and by the late 1850s these were widely available in curiosity shops, tea warehouses and department stores. La Porte Chinoise at 36 rue Vivienne was one of the most frequented stores, its collections of woodblock prints and manga attracting leading artists and collectors.

French designers were also the first to execute works incorporating Japanese imagery, the most famous being the Bracquemond-Rousseau service, 1866, the first example of Japoniste design to be commercially produced. It was exhibited at the 1867 Paris International Exhibition and was received to critical acclaim.

Paris became the centre for Japonisme dealers and during the 1870s Siegfried Bing emerged as the most significant, running several shops that catered both to the popular and more discriminating ends of the market. By the 1890s he had become the leading dealer in Japonisme and Art Nouveau design across Europe and North America.

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

Louis Malpass decorator

France active 1870s–90s

Paul Blot Studio, Paris

commissioning workshop

France active 1870s–90s

Plate

1880s

porcelain (bone china)

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.

Gift of Dr Robert Wilson through the Australian

Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2013

2013.748

François-Eugène Rousseau (attributed to)

France 1827–1891

Pair of vases

c. 1880

glass (rock crystal, engraved), brass

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Dr Robert Wilson, Governor, 1998

1998.140.1-2

François-Eugène Rousseau designer

France 1827–91

Appert Frères, Clichy manufacturer

France 1832–1947

Vase

1880–84

glass

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Australian Consolidated Industries Limited, Governor, 1982

D30-1982

François-Eugène Rousseau was a glass designer from around 1867 whose work was predominantly experimental. He inherited a Parisian shop that sold glass and ceramics and was one of the first Japonistes to encourage Japanese design in works he commissioned and designed. This *Vase*, based on the form of an ancient Chinese bronze, is decorated with Japanese-inspired imagery of carp diving amid leafy plants. Its exoticism is enhanced by drifts of gold dust and streaks of deep crimson through the glass. The mix of design references is indicative of the eclectic taste for Asian art that at times became conflated in Western design of the period.

Creil & Montereau Manufactory, Oise manufacturer

France active 1840–95

Félix Bracquemond designer

France 1833–1914

Katsushika Hokusai (after)

Japan 1760–1849

François-Eugène Rousseau

commissioning agent

France 1827–91

Serving platter

from the *Bracquemond-Rousseau* dinner service

1866 designed, 1886–90 manufactured

earthenware

Purchased with funds donated by Merv Keehn and Sue Harlow, 2018

New acquisition

Edmond Lachenal

France 1855–1948

Jardinière and stand

1889

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Dr Robert Wilson, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2001

2001.312.a-b

This impressively scaled *Jardinière and stand* imitates a Chinese ceramic form but is painted with Japanese-inspired decoration of carp swimming amid frothing water. The prominent band of scale pattern that cuts through the middle is a typical visual device of Japanese design whereby a formal design element boldly intersects informal, painterly decoration. The vase was designed and produced by French ceramicist Edmond Lachenal, who ran his own small manufacturing workshop south of Paris. It was exhibited on Lachenal's stand at the Paris International Exhibition of 1889 and illustrated in the exhibition's catalogue.

Boulangier, Hautin and Co., Choisy-le-Roi manufacturer

France 1836–78

Paul Comolera modeller

France 1818–1917

Cockatoo

c. 1870

earthenware (majolica)

Gift of Mary and Jim Allinson, 2012

2012.160

This imposing theatrical work of a cockatoo being startled by an unsuspecting beetle is deeply evocative of Japoniste taste of the period. The large, animated bird with wings outstretched plays to the Japanese love of nature and the individuality and expressiveness of animals, often captured in spontaneous movement. The use of short, angled bamboo stems was a popular motif with Western designers and the designer further emphasised this exotic reference by using bamboo for the vine between the larger stems. The intense yet subtle range of coloured glazes is a further reference to the Japanese love of bold colour in combination with sophisticated subtlety.

Katsushika Hokusai

Japan 1760–1849

Pages 44 and 45 from Hokusai Manga, volume 2

1814, mid 19th century published
artist's book: colour woodblocks, 60 pages, paper cover,
stitched binding

Purchased, 1954

3134B-4

Lucien Pissarro engraver

France 1863–1944

Camille Pissarro designer

Denmark/France 1830–1903

Studies

Études

plate from *Les travaux des champs* *Work in the fields*,
first series, published by Vale Press, London, 1904

1893

woodcut printed in light brown ink on light brown paper
edition of 25

Felton Bequest, 1914

647-2

Creil & Montereau Manufactory, Oise manufacturer

France active 1840–95

Félix Bracquemond designer

France 1833–1914

Katsushika Hokusai (after)

Japan 1760–1849

François-Eugène Rousseau

commissioning agent

France 1827–91

Round dish, dinner plate, footed oval dish and sauceboat on stand

from the *Bracquemond-Rousseau* dinner service
1866 designed, 1886–90 manufactured
earthenware

Purchased with funds donated by Merv Keehn and Sue Harlow, 2018

The *Bracquemond-Rousseau* service is recognised as the first example of commercially produced Japoniste design. It was first exhibited at the Paris International Exhibition of 1867, where it was received to critical acclaim, and remained in continuous production until the 1930s. The service was designed by the engraver Félix Bracquemond and commissioned by retailer François-Eugène Rousseau. The forms, along with the blue feathered rim, are eighteenth century in inspiration, but the decorative motifs, taken from the natural world, are derived directly from Hokusai's *Manga* and woodblock prints. The service is an early example of a European designer copying Japanese motifs and their asymmetric placement and transposing them onto traditional Western forms.

New acquisition

Katsushika Hokusai

Japan 1760–1849

Pages 24 and 25 from Hokusai Manga, Volume I

1814, mid 19th century published
artist's book: colour woodblocks, 56 pages, paper cover,
stitched binding

Purchased, 1954

3134A-4

Hokusai's fifteen-volume suite of *Manga* – small, bound books of printed designs – were enormously influential on Western artists and designers. They contain studies of animals, birds, fish, flowers, landscapes and people, observed with great freedom and attention to detail. Copies of *Manga* had arrived in Paris by the late 1850s and immediately attracted the attention of critics, collectors and artists. During the 1860s and 1870s they became a primary source for Western artists in their imagery and composition, and many copied from them directly. Motifs from Hokusai's *Manga* can be identified across a range of French ceramics and glass from the period.

J. Vieillard & Co., Bordeaux, Aquitaine
manufacturer

France 1829–95

Katsushika Hokusai (after)

Japan 1760–1849

Dinner plate

1870s–1890s

earthenware

Collection of Galerie Au Bain Marie, Paris

J. Vieillard & Co., Bordeaux, Aquitaine
manufacturer
France 1829–95

**Two dinner plates from the Mice
service**
1870s–1790s
earthenware

Collection of Galerie Au Bain Marie, Paris

J. Vieillard & Co., Bordeaux, Aquitaine
manufacturer

France 1829–95

Katsushika Hokusai (after)

Japan 1760–1849

Two dinner plates, from the *Japanese scenes service*

1870s–1890s

earthenware

Collection of Galerie Au Bain Marie, Paris

Siegfried Bing commissioning editor

Germany/France 1838–1905

Sampson Low, Marston, Searle &

Rivington, London publisher

England c. 1876 – c. 1890

Page 1 from Artistic Japan, volume 1, 1888

May–October 1888

bound journals: colour lithograph, paper, cardboard cover, other materials

Collection of Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne

In 1888, the Parisian art dealer Siegfried Bing established the monthly journal, *Le Japon artistique* (Artistic Japan), to increase awareness of and enthusiasm for Japanese art. He commissioned a wide range of artists, critics and collectors to contribute articles on subjects relating to Japanese art, crafts and culture. The journal was published in French, English and German and remained in production for four years. Each issue contained one main article accompanied by ten colour plates. Each cover featured a colour image of a Japanese woodblock print and these covers have become some of the most recognised imagery of Japonisme.

Creil & Montereau Manufactory, Oise manufacturer

France active 1840–95

Two footed dishes, four dessert plates and five cups and saucers

from the *Kyoto* service

1878 designed, 1878–84 manufactured
earthenware

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Decorative Arts, 2018

The *Kyoto* service is representative of the enthusiasm for Japoniste-inspired domestic objects among the French middle classes, which peaked during the 1870s and 1880s. The decorative mix of Japanese and Chinese imagery, along with Western ornamentation is typical of the eclectic nature of such domestic objects at the time. Each flat piece is decorated with a square Japanese plate placed over the European round form and decorated with overlapping cartouche forms, referencing poem cards, fans and the so-called snowflake design. The decoration within each cartouche represents a mix of Japanese landscape, bird and floral imagery, ink sticks, abstract repeat patterns, and scenes from traditional tales, including the *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*.

New acquisition

Louis Gonse author

France 1846–1921

A. Quantin, Paris publisher

France 1876–86

**Title page from *L'Art Japonais*
(*Japanese Art*), volume 2, 1883**

1883

book: colour lithograph, paper, cardboard cover,
other materials

Collection of Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne

Louis Gonse was a writer, art historian, critic and collector of Japanese art who was intimately associated with the Parisian circle of leading Japonistes and their collections. He organised a major exhibition of Japanese art in 1883 and the same year published his two-volume work *L'Art Japonais*, a ground-breaking survey of Japanese art. The volumes contain lengthy essays on painting, architecture and the decorative arts, richly illustrated with woodblock prints, photographs and line drawings. Many of the works were from private Parisian collections. *L'Art Japonais* is recognised as one of the most significant early Western publications on Japanese art.

The *Grands Oiseaux* (Large Birds) service

The Vieillard faïence factory of Bordeaux produced fine earthenwares inspired by the creamwares made famous in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Vieillard's wares were exported in considerable quantities, taking advantage of the proximity of the port of Bordeaux. The factory won fame for a Japoniste table service created in the late 1870s known as the Grands Oiseaux (Large Birds) service. Attributed to the architect-designer Eugène Millet – a student of the great exponent of Gothic Revival, Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc – this service drew inspiration from the prints of Hokusai, as well as the earlier Bracquemond-Rousseau service first produced by the Creil et Montereau factory in 1867.

Unlike the Bracquemond-Rousseau service, the Japanese-inspired imagery of birds, fish and flowers on the Grands Oiseaux service are dramatically placed to cover the entirety of the plate or vessel's surface. The service was much admired for its refined design and the delicacy of its enamelled colours, and won numerous medals at international exhibitions.

The pieces on display here that have a gold border are from a special version of the service created for the 1878 Paris International Exhibition.

Top to bottom, left to right

J. Vieillard & Co., Bordeaux

manufacturer

France 1845–95

Eugène Millet (attributed to) designer

France 1819–79

Amédée de Caranza designer

France 1843–1914

Part dinner and dessert service

from the *Grands oiseaux (Large birds)* service

1878–80

earthenware

Purchased with funds donated by Peter and Ivanka Canet, 2018

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat (Large birds formal service)*

Dish

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat (Large birds formal service)*

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat (Large birds formal service)*

...continued overleaf

Oval dish

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Large oval dish

from the *Grands oiseaux* (Large birds) service

Oval dish

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dessert plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux* (Large birds) service

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux* (Large birds) service

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux* (Large birds) service

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux* (Large birds) service

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux* (Large birds) service

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dessert plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Large fish platter

from the *Grands oiseaux* (Large birds) service

Dessert plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dinner plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dessert plate

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Serving dish on stand

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Large bowl on elephant-form stand

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Bowl on elephant-form stand

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Serving dish on stand

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

Dish

from the *Grands oiseaux service d'apparat* (Large birds formal service)

New acquisition

The Anglo-Japanese style

The Anglo-Japanese style was a British interpretation of Japonisme that emerged in the 1860s. For some artists, the style was particularly associated with the Arts and Crafts principles of reviving handcraft traditions and reforming design in the decorative arts. Japanese art, with its reverence for the natural world and unique design aesthetics, was a source of great inspiration for artists, architects and designers alike.

James McNeill Whistler was one of the earliest proponents of Japonisme in England. He introduced the painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Japanese woodblock prints and thus began a cult-like fascination for Japonisme among Rossetti's circle of bohemian artists and cultural aesthetes, which included the architect-designer Edward William Godwin and social commentator Oscar Wilde. Christopher Dresser was another leading designer of the period and his unique synthesis of Japanese design was more radical than the work of any other artist of the period.

In tandem with the ideals of artists and designers, the Anglo-Japanese style was a popular decorative taste led by ceramic, glass and metalwork firms who marketed their products to the English middle classes. Objects were decorated with an array of Japanese motifs, including cranes, carp, chrysanthemums, geometric fretwork, circular crests (mon) and women with parasols, feeding the voracious taste for Japonisme.

Utagawa Hiroshige

Japan 1797–1858

Waka Bay in Kii Province

from the *Famous Views of the 60 Odd Provinces* series
1855

colour woodblock

Presented by Mrs J. Ringland Anderson, 1972

AS9-1972

Christopher Dresser designer

Scotland 1834–1904

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

Tea service

c. 1872–74

porcelain (bone china)

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.84.a-b,e-g

The crane is an auspicious bird in Japan and a symbol of longevity and good fortune. Naturally elegant and decorative in form, it was well suited as an ornamental motif and occurred frequently in woodblock prints and on a broad range of objects made for export. The British designer Christopher Dresser often employed it as a decorative motif on his ceramic designs. This *Tea service* is conventional in form and decorated with Minton's well-known turquoise ground colour, but what enlivens it are the flying cranes depicted in a variety of poses and dispersed across the surfaces in an uncluttered manner.

Japan

Fan

late 19th century

watercolour and metallic paint on paper, bamboo, metal

Collier Bequest, 1955

1491G-D4

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

Aaron Green decorator

England c. 1820–96

Vase

1870

porcelain (bone china)

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Dr Robert Wilson, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2001

2001.319

Japan

Vase with cranes and tortoise

late 19th century

earthenware, gold, enamel (Satsuma ware)

Felton Bequest, 1921

2137-D3

William Morris designer

England 1834–96

Philip Webb designer

England 1831–1915

Jeffrey & Co., London manufacturer

England c. 1836–1930

Morris & Co., London retailer

England 1861–1940

Trellis wallpaper

1864 designed

colour woodcut on paper

Gift of Michael Whiteway, 2009

2009.384

Despite William Morris's stated disapproval of Japanese design, his Trellis wallpaper pays clear homage to Japanese imagery and aesthetics. The partitioning of the design into a grid-like pattern was a common device in Japanese woodblock prints and was used in juxtaposition with the less formal aspects of the rest of a design, in this case the climbing rose and birds. The unusual depictions of the birds in Morris's wallpaper, shown flying, stationary and from side on, behind and from the front, are typical of the dynamic representations of birds in Japanese art.

Christopher Dresser designer

Scotland 1834–1904

Hukin & Heath, Birmingham

manufacturer

England 1855–1904

Tea service

1879 designed

silver electroplate, ivory

Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of Mr Hugh Morgan AC,
Governor, 2002

2002.353.a-d

Christopher Dresser's metalwork designs are some of his most radical and uncompromising; generally undecorated and severely plain. Dresser was one of the most knowledgeable European designers on Japanese art and culture and had studied it extensively. He visited Japan in 1876–77, believing that to fully understand a culture, one had to be immersed in it; only then could one draw on it successfully. The angular handles of this service, coupled with the plain, rounded forms, angular feet and functional rivet details – the only nod towards ornament – reflect Dresser's absorption of Japanese design aesthetics.

E. W. Godwin

England 1833–86

Design for Butterfly brocade

c. 1874

relief print, watercolour and pencil on brown paper

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria assisted by
J. B. Were & Son, Governor, 1989

P108-1989

Godwin's design for a woven silk upholstery fabric illustrates his mature Anglo-Japanese style. The background is taken up with a criss-cross trellis design – a familiar motif in Japanese art – while the main design is composed of repeat circular frames enclosing stylised magnolia blossoms and leaves. The motif is taken directly from a Japanese mon, or samurai crest. The smaller circular motifs in between are stylised representations of the chrysanthemum flower – the flower of the Japanese emperor and a symbol of longevity. Butterflies are placed in between the large motifs as flat decoration, another common decorative device in Japanese design.

Christopher Dresser (attributed to)

designer

Scotland 1834–1904

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

Plate

c. 1880

porcelain (bone china)

The Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson, 2012

2012.162

Christopher Dresser designer

Scotland 1834–1904

Old Hall Earthenware Co.,

Staffordshire manufacturer

England 1861–1902

Hampden pattern, covered vegetable tureen and stand

c. 1884

earthenware (creamware)

Gift of Andrew and Elizabeth Clarke, 2016

2016.170.a-c

This covered tureen and stand is decorated with a transfer printed pattern with select details hand painted to emphasise the asymmetry of the design. The decoration makes direct reference to Japanese design through the angular geometric bands that cut across the corners, as if making oblique reference to a garden fence. The bold combination of geometric patterns in these bands, interspersed with floral and cropped circular motifs, are typical of Japanese design elements and their asymmetric use, as is the combination of these strong geometric elements with the larger, more delicate floral sprays. The yellow painted chrysanthemum on the cover is an overt reference to Japanese imagery.

The Aesthetic Movement

The Aesthetic Movement was one of a wave of design-reform movements that arose in late nineteenth-century Europe and America in reaction to the Industrial Revolution. The movement sought to improve architectural and design taste and promoted the idea that the arts should provide refined sensuous pleasure, rather than convey improving messages. 'Art for art's sake' was the movement's rallying cry.

Aestheticism, in part, was a reaction against the utilitarian ideas of the Arts and Crafts and Gothic Revival movements, which saw art as something useful or moral. Artists and designers working in the Aesthetic manner were powerfully influenced by Japanese art and adopted compositional strategies and imagery from imported Japanese artworks in their own creations, as exemplified in the play of solid and void space in E. W. Godwin's *Sideboard*, 1867. For Western viewers ignorant of Japanese culture, Japanese art carried none of the weighty symbolic and historical associations that, for example, the medieval art beloved of the Arts and Crafts movement did. Japanese art could be appreciated by Western viewers in purely aesthetic terms, providing visual delight without any heavy-handed moral didacticism.

James McNeill Whistler

United States / France / England 1834–1903

The Venetian mast

plate from Venice, a Series of Twelve Etchings (*or The First Venice set*)

1880, 1880–89 printed

etching and drypoint printed in dark brown ink,
10th of 12 states

Felton Bequest, 1914

604-2

The American-born Whistler was a key figure in the early Aesthetic Movement in Britain. While working in Paris he became gripped by the Japan craze and when he relocated to London, he did much to enthuse artistic circles about what was previously an exclusively Parisian trend. He collaborated closely with architect Edward William Godwin to create a number of striking Japanese-influenced interiors, both for exhibitions of his own work, and for his home. His work as a painter and printmaker shows the profound effect of Japanese aesthetics and his greatest works herald the dawn of abstraction.

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

Charlotte H. Spiers decorator

England active 1870s

Plaque

1876

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.95

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

Charlotte H. Spiers decorator

England active 1870s

Plaque

1875

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.94

William Arthur Smith Benson designer

England 1854–1924

W. A. S. Benson & Co. Ltd, London

manufacturer

England 1880–1920

Pair of candlesticks

c. 1890–1914

copper, silvered brass, lacquered white metal

Purchased with funds donated by the Australian Decorative and
Fine Arts Society, Yarra Inc., 2010

2010.553.1-2

China

Pair of vases

Qing dynasty, Kangxi period 1662–1722
porcelain

Bequest of Howard Spensley, 1939

4374.1-2-D3

A taste for blue-and-white decorated Chinese and Japanese porcelain became a touchstone of Aesthetic sensibility in the 1860s. Artists like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and James McNeill Whistler were instrumental in popularising the fashion, and by the 1880s mass groupings of blue-and-white porcelain of varying quality was becoming a cliché. The lack of interest in accurately distinguishing between Chinese porcelain and Japanese artworks demonstrates that the Japonisme of the Aesthetes was not immune to a more generic, exoticising Orientalism.

China

Vase

Qing dynasty, Kangxi period 1662–1722
porcelain

Felton Bequest, 1947

580-D4

Maw & Co., Broseley, Shropshire
manufacturer
England 1850–1970

Set of tiles

c. 1880
earthenware

Gift of Ms Jenny Buch, 1992

D6A-1992

Christopher Dresser designer

Scotland 1834–1904

Ault Pottery, Swadlincote, Derbyshire

manufacturer

England 1887–1923

Vase

c. 1896

earthenware

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Decorative Arts, 2017

2017.1022

New acquisition

E. W. Godwin designer

England 1833–86

Armchair

c. 1877

ebonised wood, cane

Purchased, 1975

D69-1975

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
manufacturer
England est. 1793

Pair of fireplace tiles
1879
porcelain

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.
Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane, 2008

2008.85.a-b

E. W. Godwin designer

England 1833–86

William Watt, London manufacturer

England 1857–c. 1887

Sideboard

1867 designed, c. 1886–87 manufactured
ebonised wood, brass, gold paint

Felton Bequest, 1977

D154.a-g-1977

The progressive architect-designer Edward William Godwin was a leading figure in the Aesthetic Movement. He originally designed this *Sideboard*, which exists in a number of versions, for his own use in 1867. It represents one of the most radical furniture designs of the nineteenth century. Its modular arrangement of components, straight lines, lightness of construction and absence of turning or carving reject the norms of contemporary Victorian furniture, while revealing Godwin's interest in Japanese design through the careful balance of solid and void, the lacquer-inspired ebonised finish, and the gilt decoration evoking traditional Japanese motifs such as the circular heraldic *mon*.

China

Vase

Qing dynasty, Qianlong period 1736–95
porcelain

Gift of H. W. Kent, 1938

3774-D3

E. W. Godwin (attributed to) designer

England 1833–86

Collinson & Lock, London

(attributed to) manufacturer

England active 19th century

Hanging cabinet

c. 1872–75

ebonised wood, glass, mirror, brass

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Terence Lane, Governor, 2001

2001.192

The influence of Japanese subject matter on composition

Western artists responded to Japan in a variety of ways. Japanese art provided them with models for new ways to think about composition and design, as well as a range of subject matter that differed from the conventional concerns of the Western academic tradition. Many artists adopted formal qualities of Japanese art that grew into hallmarks of Japonisme: asymmetry, broad areas of colour and pattern, expressive stylised lines, abstraction, and emphasis on the flatness of the picture plane.

The subjects depicted on late Edo-period Japanese woodblock prints seemed novel to Western eyes and included intimate and often erotic depictions of women, the pleasures and distractions of urban life, and the wonders to be found in close observation of the natural world. Such imagery inspired many Western artists to explore similar subject matter in their own work.

City life

The ukiyo-e school of woodblock prints that flourished during the Edo period (1600–1868) often depicted the pleasurable diversions available to newly prosperous Japanese urban middle classes, including scenes of Japan's licensed red-light districts and extravagances of kabuki theatre. These images of the Japanese urban environment encouraged Western artists of the late nineteenth century to explore the urban worlds of burgeoning metropolises like Paris, London and New York, depicting the life of these cities in images of actors, entertainers, prostitutes, bohemians and modern streetscapes, in a manner unprecedented in the canon of Western academic art.

Alfred Stieglitz

United States 1864–1946, lived in Germany 1880s

Snapshot from my window

1907, 1911 printed
photogravure

Purchased, 1979

PH185-1979

Camille Pissarro

Denmark/France 1830–1903

Boulevard Montmartre, morning, cloudy weather

***Boulevard Montmartre, matin,
temps gris***

1897

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1905

204-2

Pissarro's painting of the Boulevard Montmartre is one of a series of fourteen views looking east along the broad avenue he painted between 10 February and 17 April 1897. These views show the wide thoroughfare created by Baron Haussman's remodelling of the centre of Paris from the 1860s onwards, eliminating the narrow, winding streets of the medieval city. The depiction of a bustling crowd strolling through the streetscape owes much to Japanese scenes of fashionable urban life, as does the elevated viewpoint that creates the impression that we are leaning out into the street.

Utagawa Hiroshige II

Japan 1826–69

Nakanochō in the Yoshiwara

from the *Famous Places in the Eastern Capital* series

1862

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1910

517-2

Scenes of fashionably clad Japanese enjoying the diversions provided by the Yoshiwara pleasure district of Edo (Tokyo) are a recurring theme of *ukiyo-e* prints. Here a procession moves along a street with cherry blossoms in full bloom. The exaggerated perspective of the view down the street running back into the picture was a compositional device that was frequently taken up by Western artists who also began to explore the urban life of Europe's rapidly changing cities in their art.

Pierre Bonnard

France 1867–1947

Boulevard

Le Boulevard

from the *Quelques Aspects de la vie de Paris*

Some Scenes of Parisian life portfolio 1895–98

c. 1896, 1899 published

colour lithograph, edition of 100

Felton Bequest, 1970

P89.6-1970

The frieze-like arrangement of the composition of Bonnard's lithograph, tightly confining the figures within a limited space, is directly inspired by Japanese compositions. The row of truncated trees on the street, another Japanese visual device, isolates the individual figures from one another while forcing a sense of spatial depth into the composition without the use of single-point perspective.

Yashima Gakutei

Japan c. 1786–1868

Moonlight night at Suehiro Bridge

from the Famous places of Naniwa (Osaka), view of
Mt. Tempō at a glance (Naniwa meisho Tempōzan shōkei
ichiran) series

c. 1834

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1909

464-2

Alvin Langdon Coburn

United States / Wales 1882–1966

The bridge, London

1904, 1914 printed
photogravure

Purchased, 1993

PH179-1993

Coburn was a key figure in the development of American Pictorialism, a movement that involved the manipulation of a photograph to 'create' an image, rather than simply record it. In compositional terms, the framing of a photographic image had much in common with the unusual, dynamic framings employed by Japanese woodblock artists. Many Pictorialist photographers made use of other Japanese-inspired devices in composing images. The cropping of a London bridge in this photograph, and the prow (the portion of a ship's bow above water) of the boat at the very front of the picture plane, show Coburn's familiarity with works like Gakutei's *Moonlight night at Suehiro Bridge*, displayed nearby.

James McNeill Whistler

United States 1834–1903, worked in France 1855–59,
England 1859–1903

Old Battersea Bridge

1879

lithograph

2nd of 2 states

Purchased, 1971

P13-1971

Whistler's art was powerfully influenced by Japanese woodblock prints. This unusually cropped image of Old Battersea Bridge over London's River Thames is directly inspired by images like Gakutei's *Moonlight night at Suehiro Bridge*, c. 1834, displayed nearby. Whistler has signed this lithograph in the plate with a round butterfly device inspired by marks on Chinese blue-and-white porcelain and Japanese heraldic *mon* emblems.

Ambrose Patterson

Australia / United States 1877–1966

La Gaîté Montparnasse, Paris

1903–06

oil on wood panel

Marie Theresa McVeigh Trust, 2013

2013.38

Born in Daylesford, Victoria, Ambrose Patterson studied painting under E. Phillips Fox at the National Gallery Art School in Melbourne before moving to Paris. There he became part of the Paris art scene, establishing a friendship with fellow Australian Dame Nellie Melba, who organised for him to study with John Singer Sargent. Patterson exhibited at the 1905 Paris salon when Matisse and the Fauves stunned the art world. This panel painting of the stage at the Parisian theatre *La Gaîté Montparnasse* shows a strongly Japanese-influenced composition with its steep viewing angle down onto the stage and the truncated framing of the scene.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

France 1864–1901

The jockey

Le Jockey

1899

colour lithograph, edition of 112

Felton Bequest, 1974

P1-1974

One of Toulouse-Lautrec's last lithographs, *The jockey*, is set at Longchamps, the older and more fashionable of the two racecourses in the Bois de Boulogne, a park on the western outskirts of Paris. Inspired by Édouard Manet and Edgar Degas, who had attended and depicted these races before him, Lautrec captured the excitement, speed and tension of the race by ingeniously placing the viewer behind the galloping horses, as though we too are participating in the race. The depiction of the horse's flying gallop is directly inspired by Japanese models.

Utagawa Toyokuni I

Japan 1769–1825

Karagiri Sukesaku

from the *Seven famous spearman of the Battle of Shizugatake (Shizugatake Shichi-hon-yari Komyo-no-zu)* series

c. 1800

colour woodblock

Purchased, 1945

1436-4

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

France 1864–1901

Bust of Marcelle Lender Mademoiselle Marcelle Lender, en buste

1895

colour lithograph

Purchased, 1971

P7-1971

This lithograph was first published in the German arts and literary journal *Pan* in 1895. It depicts the French singer and dancer Marcelle Lender in extravagant stage costume for the part of Galswinthe in Hervé's operetta *Chilpéric*. The image's subject matter – a figure from the popular stage in a comic role – reflects the influence of Japanese kabuki actor portraiture, as does the dramatic framing of the sitter's profile and use of flat fields of decoration and expressive lines to delineate the face.

Hirosada

Japan active 1819–65

Kunimasu

Japan active 1830–52

Masanobu

Japan active 1849–53

Kunishige

Japan active 1847–51

Portraits of kabuki actors

c. 1848

album: colour woodblock, 49 prints, wood, paper, silk and gold leaf cover, glue and concertina binding

Purchased, 1992

AS10-1992

Women

As Western women became more involved in public life around the turn of the twentieth century, they also became more active participants in several fin-de-siècle artistic movements, especially Japonisme. They were collectors of Japanese art and exotica, they were artists inspired by Japanese art, and they were themselves the subjects of works of art.

The taste for Japan became associated early on with wealthy female consumers who wore imported silks and decorated their homes with curiosities. Japanese culture was imagined to be feminine, symbolised by geishas and courtesans, and figures like Madama Butterfly. The frequency with which images of beautiful women appear in Japanese woodblock prints reinforced this stereotype.

Philip Wilson Steer

England 1860–1942

The Japanese gown

1896

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1906

264-2

Paintings of European women dressed in kimono were among the first Japanese-inspired works of art in the West, becoming popular during the 1860s and 1870s. The kimono was a sign of fashionable good taste, Japanese textiles and costume being an essential item in a chic wardrobe of the period. The garment imbues the woman here with a sensuality, standing as she is in a boudoir, garbed as if about to receive an intimate visitor.

Utagawa Hiroshige

Japan 1797–1858

View of Kasumigaseki in the eastern capital

Tōto kusumigaseki no kei

c. 1849

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1910

514-2

Many Western artists and collectors were familiar with the genre of Japanese woodblock print known as *bijin-ga*, depicting beautiful women who were often inhabitants of the Yoshiwara quarter of Edo, where brothels known as ‘green houses’ catered to male clients. Wealthy ladies and the wives of merchants might also appear in these prints, but their attire is sometimes indistinguishable from elegantly garbed geishas. Many (male) Westerners, enthralled with the idea of Japan as a land of ‘naughty geishas’, seem not to have understood that the beauties in these prints might be respectable ladies, and not sexually available women.

Utagawa Hiroshige

Japan 1797–1858

View of Kasumigaseki in the eastern capital

Tōto kusumigaseki no kei

c. 1849

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1910

511-2

Callot Soeurs, Paris fashion house

France 1895–1937

Marie Callot Gerber designer

France c. 1870–1927

Evening coat

c. 1920

silk (satin), glass (beads), metallic thread, feathers

The Dominique Sirop Collection. Purchased with funds donated by
Mrs Krystyna Campbell-Pretty in memory of Mr Harold Campbell-Pretty, 2015

2015.590

The depiction of women in kimono in Japanese woodblock prints was an important source of inspiration for Western couturiers in the early twentieth century. The kimono's emphasis on textile, flat construction, as well as the looseness of the garment draped on the body, contributed to the creation of garments that liberated women's bodies from the restrictive clothing of the past. This glamorous evening coat by Callot Soeurs exemplifies this progressive tendency in Parisian fashion.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

France 1864–1901

May Belfort

1895

colour lithograph

Felton Bequest, 1948

1847-4

May Belfort was an Irish singer who lived and worked in Paris. She gained notoriety in 1895 for her performance of the song, 'Daddy wouldn't buy me a bow-wow', the lyrics of which ran, 'I've got a little cat / And I'm very fond of that'. Toulouse-Lautrec depicted Belfort several times, frequently showing her, as here, holding a small black cat, a reference both to her signature song and to the lesbian affairs for which she was known. In this poster, Toulouse-Lautrec, inspired by Japanese prints, reduces Belfort's clothed body to a flat field' of colour and signs his work with a Japanese-inspired circular monogram.

Jules Chéret

France 1836–1932

Palais de Glace, Champs-Élysées

published as a supplement in *Le Courrier français*,
20 Jan. 1895

1894, 1895 reduced version printed
colour lithograph

Purchased, 1966

1710-5

Jules Chéret was the first great French poster artist and is often referred to as the father of the modern poster. Chéret's poster designs were highly innovative, elevating the image so it was the dominant feature and reducing the role of text. Most of his posters show images of women depicted in dynamic poses and executed in bright, harmonious colours. Japanese prints of *bijin* (beautiful women) were enormously influential on Chéret's work, both in terms of subject matter and use of colour. Printed on inexpensive paper, the poster transformed the streetscapes of great cities like Paris, filling them with Japoniste imagery.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

France 1864–1901

Divan Japonais

1893

colour lithograph

Felton Bequest, 1948

1846-4

This striking poster advertises the café cabaret *Divan Japonais* in Paris. Toulouse-Lautrec revolutionised the art of poster-making by drawing upon compositional techniques found in Japanese woodblock prints to integrate lettering and pictorial elements. The use of strong diagonal lines that run off the sides of the page serve to flatten the image, while the figures are depicted using only flat blocks of colour. The calligraphic lettering sits on the same flattened plane as the pictorial content – the J of Japonais disappears behind the feather of the seated woman's hat.

Kitagawa Utamaro

Japan 1754–1806

After the bath

Furoagari

late 19th century

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1910

531-2

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec

France 1864–1901

Woman with mirror

Femme à glace - La glace à main

1896

crayon, brush and splatter lithograph

Purchased, 1953

3041-4

The depiction of women engaged in intimate activities like bathing and grooming was an important subject in Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints. This lithograph by Toulouse-Lautrec is from a series of carefully observed brothel scenes showing moments of quiet intimacy between a lesbian couple, possibly the Moulin Rouge clown Cha-U-Kao and her partner Gabrielle, both of whom Toulouse-Lautrec knew. The lithograph avoids the voyeuristic titillation that characterises many of the Japanese models, presenting instead a sympathetic image of women's private lives.

Landscape

In the Japanese representation of the landscape, we observe a number of pictorial devices that Western artists – including painters, printmakers and photographers keen to explore new ways of organising pictorial space – readily absorbed.

While linear perspective was a fundamental aspect of a Western artist's composition, the Japanese employed contrasts of colour and repetition of forms to present an ambiguous sense of depth. The Japanese use of narrow vertical and horizontal formats similarly offered new ways of organising pictorial space. This emphasis on the linear evoked its own sense of drama which, in the words of artist Emil Orlik, 'creat[ed] interplay between [the] picture surface and pictorial space'. The cropped viewpoint, particularly from an angle – a common feature of Japanese woodblock prints – was also adopted by many Western artists.

Many painters were captivated by the atmospheric effects in Japanese prints, which celebrated the fleeting nature of the seasons and different times of the day reflected in the changing light. Equally, the importance that Japanese artists placed on empty space, air and light, as much as the representation of people and buildings, was one of the most inspiring aspects of Japanese art for Western artists.

Arthur Streeton

Australia 1867–1943, lived in England 1897–1919

Balloons on fire

1918

oil on canvas

Gilbee Bequest, 1918

960-3

The idyllic pastoral impression of this painting belies the fact that it depicts a tragic scene from the First World War, of four Allied observers falling to their deaths on the battlefields of France, their balloons having been shot down by enemy German aircraft. Nevertheless, despite the gruesome and documentary nature of this painting, it is full of soft, atmospheric effects which consume at least three quarters of the painting. Such focus on the sky and atmosphere, along with the simple, blocked-in land features, depicted in a long linear fashion, reveal the strong influence of Japanese woodblock prints.

Arthur Streeton

Australia 1867–1943, lived in England 1897–1919

At Coogee

1895

oil on wood panel

Purchased, 1959

313-5

Utagawa Toyokuni I

Japan 1769–1825

Washing by the river in autumn

1826–35

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1909

457-2

Utagawa Hiroshige

Japan 1797–1858

Monkey bridge in winter

Fuyu no sarubashi

1843–45

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1910

521-2

Arthur Streeton

Australia 1867–1943, lived in England 1897–1919

Sydney Harbour

1895

oil on wood panel on wood

The Joseph Brown Collection. Presented through the NGV Foundation by
Dr Joseph Brown AO OBE, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2004

2004.223

The narrow, vertical format of this painting is directly inspired by Japanese hanging scrolls, or kakemono. Similarly, Streeton's cropped view and the dark cliff face of the foreground, represented almost as one block of colour, contrasting against the brightness of the background, creates an ambiguous sense of depth, an approach often seen in Japanese prints. There is no linear perspective in this painting; the sense of depth is created purely through contrasts of colour.

The natural world

The Japanese artist's reverence for nature in all its forms was of profound inspiration to Western artists across all areas of artistic practice. Siegfried Bing stated in his introduction to the first edition of *Le Japon artistique* (Artistic Japan), released in 1888, 'The constant guide whose indications he [the Japanese artist] follows is called 'Nature'; she is his sole, his revered teacher, and her precepts form the inexhaustible source of his inspiration'.

Western artists and designers enthusiastically embraced the rich offering of natural motifs seen on Japanese artworks arriving in Europe. Designs of birds, fish, crustaceans, swirling water, flowers and foliage were frequently copied or closely interpreted, together with the abstract compositional devices that the Japanese artists employed. This was particularly the case for manufacturers of decorative arts, whose designers had a wealth of subject matter to choose from. Similarly, the fields of printmaking, photography and poster design were deeply influenced by this taste for the natural world. Through their increasingly abstract and sophisticated interpretations of this subject matter towards the later end of the nineteenth century, these areas of artistic practice, including the decorative arts, grew in prominence alongside the traditional endeavours of painting and sculpture.

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

William Mussill decorator

England 1826–1906

Pair of vases

1876

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.

Gift of Dr Robert Wilson, 2007

2007.113.a-b

These large-scale vases represent a mix of Chinese porcelain vase forms and Japanese imagery. The Japanese-inspired painterly decoration contrasts markedly with the formal Chinese-inspired, modelled framing details. The marine decoration encompasses waterlilies, seaweed, fish and crustaceans, yet it is difficult to determine whether, as a viewer, we are underwater with the crustaceans or looking from above at the waterlilies. Such ambiguity is a common device in Japanese art. The decorator has also taken the liberty of continuing the seaweed decoration onto the neck of one of the vases, paying no heed to the formal framing devices.

Kitao Shigemasa

Japan 1739–1820

Pages 6 and 7 from Bird and flower paintings (Kwacho shashin dzue), volume 1, 1827

1827 published

artist's book: colour woodblock, 18 pages, stitched binding, paper cover

Purchased, 1961

899.1-5

Kitao Shigemasa

Japan 1739–1820

Pages 6 and 7 from Bird and flower paintings (Kwacho shashin dzue), volume 3, 1827

1827 published

artist's book: colour woodblock, 16 pages, stitched binding, paper cover

Purchased, 1961

899.3-5

Kitao Shigemasa

Japan 1739–1820

Pages 12 and 13 from Bird and flower paintings (Kwacho Shashin Dzue), volume 2, 1827

1827 published

artist's book: colour woodblock, 16 pages, stitched binding, paper cover

Purchased, 1961

899.2-5

Utagawa Hiroshige

Japan 1797–1858

Mount Fuji from the fields of Ōtsuki

from the *Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji* series

1858

colour woodblock

Purchased, 1961

887-5

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
manufacturer
England est. 1793

Vase

1880

earthenware

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Sir Thomas and Lady Travers,
Governors, 1982

D57-1982

Worcester Royal Porcelain Co.,

Worcester manufacturer

England est. 1862

James Hadley designer

England c. 1837–1903

Vase

1880

porcelain

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane, 2007

2007.704

C. H. Brannam, Barnstaple, Devon
manufacturer
England 1879–1913

Vase

1893

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.
Gift of Dr Robert Wilson, 2006

2006.479

Many of the Brannam firm's ornamental wares of the 1880s and 1890s were decorated with aquatic themes, taking their inspiration directly from Japanese art. The carp amid swirling water was a particularly popular decorative motif with Japanese and Western artists.

Thomas Webb & Sons, Stourbridge

manufacturer
England 1837–1990

Vase

c. 1888
glass

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Sir Thomas and Lady Travers,
Governors, 1982

D59-1982

The graduated coloured background of this Vase is inspired directly by the glowing skies of Japanese woodblock prints, which point to the changing times of day, in this case either sunrise or a clear twilight sky. The fact that this subtle shifting in colour has been achieved in glass is particularly remarkable. The delicate, gilt floral decoration, which follows the form of the vase, takes its cue from Japanese lacquer decoration in its raised modelling, the abstract clouds of powdered gilt sprinkled across the surface and the inclusion of a butterfly, a common Japanese decorative motif.

Utagawa Hiroshige

Japan 1797–1858

Bird on wisteria vine

Fuji ni kotori

1842–43

colour woodblock

Felton Bequest, 1910

520-2

Thomas Webb & Sons, Stourbridge manufacturer

England 1837–1990

Jules Barbe (attributed to) decorator

France/England active 1871–1907

Pair of vases

c. 1885

glass (satin glass, raised gilding)

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Dr Robert Wilson, Governor, 1998

1998.210.1-2

Utagawa Hiroshige

Japan 1797–1858

Oniwakamaru subduing a monstrous carp

from the *Illustrated biography of Yoshitsune* (*Yoshitsune ichdaiki zue*) series

mid 19th century

colour woodblock

Purchased, 1961

888-5

Bernard Moore designer

England 1853–1935

Bernard Moore Factory, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire manufacturer

England 1905–15

Covered jar

1905–15

stoneware

Gift of Professor & Mrs R. R. Andrew, 1981

D118-1981

This vase references a Chinese seventeenth-century porcelain vase form and the copper-based flambé glaze is inspired by eighteenth-century Chinese porcelains, but the decoration of an all-enveloping, underwater scene is wholly Japanese. The glowing and atmospheric decoration shows seaweed and fish softly floating around the vase and cover, with golden air bubbles drifting upwards. The abstract, all-encompassing approach to the decoration, which pays no regard to the limitations of the vase form, points towards an emerging modernism.

Burmantofts, Leeds, Yorkshire
manufacturer
England 1882–1904

Bull-frog vase
c. 1885–1891
earthenware

Gift of Mrs Susan Altmann, 1994

D66-1994

William Ferry designer

England 1861–1934, arrived Australia 1896

Victoria Art Pottery, Brunswick,

Melbourne manufacturer

Australia 1896–1912

Grotesque

c. 1898

earthenware

Purchased from Admission Funds, 1988

D48-1988

The bullfrog was one of many Japanese motifs of the natural world that Western designers were eager to reference. It occurs in at least two different poses in Hokusai's *Manga* volumes and its expressive, physical nature was popular with Japanese artists and Western designers alike. Here, the Melbourne-based Victoria Art Pottery has essentially copied the English Burmantofts' *Bull-frog vase*, revealing the Victorian-era interest in grotesque but personable, decorative animal forms.

Japan

Fan

late 19th century

paper, bamboo, lacquer on wood

Collier Bequest, 1955

1491F-D4

Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire manufacturer

England est. 1759

Garden seat

1886

earthenware (majolica)

National Gallery Society of Victoria Century Fund, 1984

D17-1984

This Wedgwood garden seat mimics a Chinese form, yet the charming decoration around the drum is essentially Japanese in inspiration. The textile for the buttoned seat appears to be gathered into taut folds at four points around the seat, but these folds represent partially opened fans with ivory handles. A branch of prunus blossom weaves its way around the seat above and behind the fans, and in between are fluttering birds. Wedgwood's 'Fan' pattern was first registered in 1879 and an example of this seat was exhibited at the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880–81.

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
manufacturer

England est. 1793

William Mussill decorator

England 1826–1906

Pair of lidded moonflasks

1877

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane, 2008

2008.89.a-d

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
manufacturer
England est. 1793

Plaque

1876

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.
Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane, 2008

2008.86

Doulton & Co., Burslem, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1882

Florence Barlow designer

England 1855–1909

Plaque

c. 1895

stoneware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Dr Robert Wilson, Founder Benefactor, 1999

1999.256.1

In 1872 the Doulton manufactory opened an art pottery studio in Lambeth, London. The Lambeth School of Art trained its own staff, mostly young women, and was devoted to the design and decoration of salt-glazed stonewares. Florence Barlow and her sister Hannah joined the studio in 1873 and became two of the firm's leading designers. Hannah concentrated on animal designs and Florence specialised in birds. Florence was particularly influenced by Japanese design; this is reflected here in the decoration of birds in flight, juxtaposed with elements of simple foliage and a background of trailing clouds, which cover the entire surface of the plaque.

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

Ellen Welby decorator

England active 1870s

Plaque

1876

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.93

Seikozan

Japan active late 19th century – early 20th century

Bowl

late 19th century – mid 20th century

earthenware, gilt, enamel (Kyo Satsuma ware)

Gift of Brenda Strang Mouritz, 2010

2010.491

Derby Crown Porcelain Co., Derby

manufacturer
England 1876–1890

Covered vase

c. 1888
porcelain

Purchased, 1889

532.a-b-D1M

The form of this vase imitates a seventeenth-century Chinese porcelain vase, but its decoration is inspired directly by Japanese Satsuma wares of the later nineteenth century, seen in the *Bowl* nearby. Nineteenth-century Satsuma ware was made specifically for export to the West and its densely packed decoration of popular Japanese motifs catered specifically to Western tastes. The Japanese *Bowl* is decorated with an array of overlapping chrysanthemum flowers over the exterior and a millefiori pattern of tiny butterflies over the interior. It is interesting to consider whether the Derby designers were aware they were referencing export wares made specifically for a Western taste.

Waka Kitei

Japan active c. 1850

Basket

c. 1850

earthenware (Kyoto ware)

Purchased, 1970

AS8-1970

C. H. Brannam, Barnstaple, Devon manufacturer

England 1879–1913

James Dewdney decorator

England active 1882 – c. 1910

Vase

1885

earthenware

Purchased, 1885

548.1-D1M

The influence of Japanese materials and decoration

Western artists were not only captivated by Japanese imagery and design, they were also fascinated by Japanese materials and the techniques used to decorate them. The sophistication of Japanese bronze sculptures, with their subtle patinas and exotic forms, incorporating dragons, samurai figures and the natural world, were hugely influential on ceramic, glass and metalwork designers. Similarly, ceramic designers were enamoured with the ancient technique of cloisonné enamelling, with its rich, jewel-like effects.

Japanese lacquer had been imported into Europe since the seventeenth century and, along with Chinese lacquer, had inspired the European technique of 'japanning', a process where furniture was varnished and finished to create a shiny black surface in an attempt to imitate lacquer. Japanned furniture was highly fashionable in mid eighteenth-century Europe and was revived in the nineteenth century through the sudden influx of Japanese goods. European designers were initially keen to imitate lacquered surfaces with decorative gold detailing in their works, but a shift occurred later in the century towards a more austere, unadorned aesthetic, where the impact of plain black surfaces, in combination with less complex, more resolved furniture designs, became important and pointed towards an emerging modernism.

Josef Hoffmann designer

Austria 1870–1956

J. & J. Kohn, Vienna manufacturer

Austria est. 1850

Adjustable-back chair

Sitzmaschine

1908

ebonised Beech (*Fagus sp.*), plywood, steel

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Jardine Matheson Australia, Fellow, 1983

D17.a-b-1983

In Hoffmann's taut *Sitzmaschine* we witness design on the cusp of modernism. His use of strong geometric forms, wrapped in a dramatic ebonised surface and combined with minimal ornamentation, speaks to a desire for form to follow function and ornament to be reduced to an essentially functional role. The formal open-grid pattern down the backrest and vertical fenestrations in the side panels reveal the direct influence of Japanese design devices.

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
manufacturer
England est. 1793

Charger
1871
earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.
Gift of Dr Robert Wilson, 2012

2012.164

Japan

Plate with dove and cherry blossom

Sakura hato zu sara

Meiji period 1868–1912

enamel (brass) (*cloisonné*)

Felton Bequest, 1932

3369-D3

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1793

Thomas Goode & Co. Ltd, London

retailer

England est. 1827

Plate

1880–90

porcelain (bone china)

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson, 2012

2012.95

The decoration on these Minton works imitates Japanese *cloisonné* enamel wares. The blue ground of this plate takes its reference directly from the blue ground of Japanese enamels, as seen on the nearby *Plate with dove and cherry blossom*. Even the foot disc on the underside is blue-glazed, highly unusual for an English ceramic plate but what one would expect on a Japanese enamelled plate. The decoration on the Minton *Charger*, nearby, has a dramatic black ground, as if imitating lacquer, yet the elegant bamboo and bird motifs are outlined in gold making clear reference to *cloisonné* enamel decoration.

Japan

Circular tray

Maru-bon

18th century

lacquer on wood (*Negoro lacquer*)

Presented by The Yulgilbar Foundation through
the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2013

2013.763

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

manufacturer
England est. 1793

Pair of tiles

c. 1885

earthenware

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane through
the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.90.a-b

These two tiles form a continuous vertical pattern and are most likely from one of the side panels of a fireplace surround. Overlapping fan shapes are placed at jaunty angles so they cut through the border design, thus giving the illusion of depth between the shapes. The fans are decorated alternately with cropped floral and willow tree motifs, and carp amid swirling water. The use of such popular Japanese ornamental motifs is indicative of the middle-class market to whom Minton would have marketed such wares.

Bernard Moore, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire manufacturer

England 1905–15

Cicely H. Jackson decorator

England active 1905–15

Dish

1905–15

stoneware

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by
Sir Thomas and Lady Travers, Governors, 1982

D65-1982

The interest in this English ceramic dish lies in its attempt to imitate Japanese *maki-e* lacquer. This technique refers to the use of metal powders, in particular gold, which are applied to the lacquer to create highly refined decorative schemes. In this instance it is the background colour around the dragon which imitates the gold powder, the reversal of how the decoration would occur on a Japanese object, thus indicating a lack of awareness by the European designer for the symbolic meaning. Here, it is simply ornament. The deep red glaze may also be referencing Japanese *Negoro* lacquer, as seen in the circular tray nearby.

Japan

Stationery box

Ryōshibako

c. 1710–50

lacquer on wood, metallic powders and foils, pigment
(*taka maki-e*, *hira maki-e*)

Purchased with funds donated by The Yulgilbar Foundation, 2008

2008.513.a-c

Carlo Bugatti

Italy/France 1856–1940

Throne

c. 1890–1900

ebonised wood, copper, painted vellum, bone, pewter, rope, silk tassels

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2006

2006.484

Carlo Bugatti's furniture designs are highly individual in their aesthetic, taking inspiration from Moorish, Islamic and Japanese design. Despite his own assertions that his work was entirely individual, he was undoubtedly influenced by the general European interest in Orientalism during the late nineteenth century. It is, nevertheless, his idiosyncratic combination of these cultural influences that make his furniture designs so unique. In this armchair, Bugatti's use of ebonised wood makes clear reference to Japanese lacquer, as do the painted pseudo-Japanese *kanji* characters over the vellum backrest and the inlaid characters, birds and whimsical floral motifs that adorn the front face.

Japan

Lidded box

c. 1888

lacquer, tortoise shell, gold paint

Accessioned, 1889

2001.a-b-D1A

W. T. Copeland and Sons, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire manufacturer
England 1867–1932

Plate

1875–90

porcelain (bone china)

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.
Gift of Dr Robert Wilson, 2012

2012.93

England, Staffordshire

Melbourne pattern, plate

c. 1888

earthenware

Gift of William Laurence Chapman, 2002

2002.45

The diagonal band of decoration running through the middle of this plate – effectively cutting it in half and relegating the ornament either side to a subsidiary role – directly imitates Japanese decorative design devices. The use of criss-crossing ornamental bands was used often in Japanese art and can be seen to great effect around the sides of the gold lacquered box nearby.

Worcester Royal Porcelain Co.,

Worcester manufacturer

England est. 1862

R. Stewart, Glasgow retailer

Scotland est. c. 1882

Tea service

1882–84

porcelain, silver, leather, silk, wood, brass

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2009

2009.109.a-n

Japan

Hairpin box

Kanzashi bako

late 19th century

lacquer on wood, silk, wood

Worcester Royal Porcelain Co.,

Worcester manufacturer

England est. 1862

James Hadley designer

England c. 1837–1903

Ewer

1888

porcelain

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane, 2007

2007.701

Japan

Vase

late 19th century

bronze

Gift of John H. Connell, 1914

1239-D3

The form and decoration of these English ceramic and glass vases take their inspiration from Japanese and Chinese bronzes. Elephant and lion-headed handles were a common feature of Asian bronzes, as were modelled dragons, which often climb over the vases. The Tooth & Co. Vase has attempted to imitate the bronze medium as well as incorporating ivory details. Three other ceramic vases imitate gilt-metal base mounts, while the Doulton Vase has actually incorporated gilt-copper mounts.

Worcester Royal Porcelain Co.,
Worcester manufacturer
England est. 1862

Vase
c. 1880
porcelain

Bequest of G.M. Castles, 1959

116-D5

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
manufacturer
England est. 1793

Double bottle
1873
porcelain (pâte-sur-pâte)

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.

Presented through the NGV Foundation by Dr Robert Wilson, Honorary Life Benefactor, 2001

2001.316

Doulton & Co., Lambeth, London

designer

England 1853–1956

Doulton & Co., Burslem, Staffordshire

manufacturer

England est. 1882

Hinks & Son, Birmingham manufacturer

England active c. 1880

Vase

1876 designed, c. 1880 manufactured
earthenware, gilt copper

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria
by Dr Robert Wilson, Governor, 1998

1998.136

**Tooth & Co. (Bretby Art Pottery),
Woodville, Derbyshire** manufacturer
England 1883–1996

Vase

c. 1895

earthenware, ivory

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection.

Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Dr Robert Wilson,
Founder Benefactor, 1999

1999.257

Thomas Webb & Sons, Stourbridge
manufacturer
England 1837–1990

Vase

c. 1880

glass (acid-etched)

Purchased, 1881

703-D1M

Worcester Royal Porcelain Co.,
Worcester manufacturer
England est. 1862

Vase

1877

porcelain (bone china)

The Dr Robert Wilson Collection. Gift of Dr Robert Wilson and Colin Lane, 2007

2007.702

Minton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire
manufacturer
England est. 1793

Vase

c. 1862–71
earthenware (majolica)

Purchased, 1881

2-D1M

Art Nouveau

The Art Nouveau movement, which enjoyed currency in Europe and North America from the late 1880s until the beginning of the First World War, is widely recognised as the beginning of modernism due to its self-conscious break with European design styles of the past. Much of Art Nouveau's innovation can be traced to lessons learned from Japanese art.

Followers of Art Nouveau believed in the unity of all arts, denying the traditional distinction between the fine arts of painting, sculpture and architecture, and the applied or decorative arts. This mirrors a Western understanding of a similar lack of differentiation between fine and applied arts in the Japanese tradition.

Inspired by Japanese art, Art Nouveau drew enormous inspiration from nature, pursuing formal innovation by emulating shapes, colours and textures from the plant and animal worlds. Art Nouveau moved beyond the literal copying of Japanese motifs and techniques. Instead we find Japanese aesthetics fully internalised, enabling artists to give expression to something bold and modern, completely of its own place and time. The mirror of Japanese art cast the gaze of Western artists back on to their own traditions, encouraging them to seek innovation and renewal and leading them to the brink of modernity.

Top to bottom, left to right

Koloman Moser designer

Austria-Hungary 1868–1918

Phantasmus, floor covering

plate 28 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Koloman Moser was a leading figure in the Vienna Secession, the manifestation of Art Nouveau in the Austro-Hungarian empire. In 1901, he published a portfolio of designs titled *Flächenschmuck* (surface decoration) which were intended to be adapted for use on a wide variety of flat surfaces, such as floor coverings, textiles and wallpapers. His sophisticated designs show the inspiration of Japanese textile patterns. Moser was a professor at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts and made use of Japanese textile stencils, *katagami*, in his teaching, presenting them to students as design models for study and emulation.

Masks, wallpaper

plate 20 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Red berries, silk fabric

plate 21 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Danube waves, wall decoration for a bathroom

plate 4 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Surface decoration

plate 1 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Wish hat, fabric in two colours

plate 14 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Arlette, silk fabric

plate 16 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Love wings, printed silk

plate 8 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

The thousand ravens, endpaper

plate 11 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

The ripening season, wall hanging

plate 7 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Silvanus, printed textile

plate 23 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

Lady day, wall hanging

plate 22 from *Flächenschmuck* series, published in *Die Quelle (The Source)*

1901

colour lithograph

Purchased with funds donated by Dr Philip Williams AM and Elizabeth Williams, 2017

2017.1024

New acquisitions

Maurice Denis

France 1870–1943

Apparition

sheet-music cover for poem by Stéphane Mallarmé,
music by André Rossignol

1894

colour lithograph

Purchased, 1997

1997.427

Maurice Denis was a leading member of the Nabis. Executed at the height of Denis' Symbolist period, this delicate image is the cover of a song sheet of Stéphane Mallarmé's evocative poem, set to music. Aiming to unite music, poetry and image, Denis uses subdued colours and flowing lines to depict Mallarmé's fairy accompanied by weeping angels strumming harps, 'her half-opened hands spilling a snow of white bouquets of perfumed stars'. Denis' use of negative space to suggest clouds and the depiction of the fairy's robed body as a single unmodelled mass are pictorial devices borrowed from Japanese prints.

George Minne

Belgium 1866–1941, worked in Wales 1914–18

Kneeling youth

1898

plaster

Purchased, NGV Women's Association to commemorate their 50th Anniversary and the 150th Anniversary of the NGV and with the assistance of the proceeds of the National Gallery of Victoria Annual Dinners, 2011

2011.10

George Minne's *Kneeling Youth* is a synthesis of form and feeling, an intensely tactile representation of emotional experience. Completely self-absorbed, the calm, introspective youth shields himself from the external world, suggesting an inner life withheld from the viewer. A prototype of Symbolist elegance, Minne's sculpture was to become one of the most celebrated and influential sculptures of the Vienna Secession at the turn of the twentieth century. The sinuous, elongated torso, gently curving yet maintaining a strength of line, reveals the influence of Japanese design through the simplification of line and form.

Paul Sérusier

France 1864–1927

Boys on a river bank

c. 1888–96, 1906 reworked

oil on canvas

Felton Bequest, 1948

1899-4

The post-Impressionist painter Paul Sérusier was a member of the Nabis, a rebellious group of young artists who aimed to revitalise painting, proclaiming that a work of art was a visual expression of the artist's synthesis of nature in personal metaphors and symbols. Their work, whilst figurative, indicated the way to abstraction and in this painting, Sérusier shows the deep lessons learned from Japanese art. The image feels flat, with illusionistic space suppressed. Figures and forms are shaped, with minimal modelling, from solid fields of colour whose effect is as much decorative as representational.

Louis Majorelle

France 1859–1926

Display cabinet

Etagère

c. 1900

Walnut (*Juglans sp.*), Boxwood (*Buxus sp.*), lemon wood, Rosewood (*Dalbergia sp.*), other timbers, silk, metal

Purchased NGV Foundation, 2016

2016.704

Louis Majorelle was one of the leading French Art Nouveau furniture makers and this cabinet epitomises his work. In Majorelle's designs, wood assumes an almost liquid character. Delicate, plant-form marquetry in exotic timbers adorns the cabinet's surface. Carved decoration softens the outlines of structural components, creating the impression they might have grown organically into these shapes, rather than been worked. A reverence for nature as the ultimate source of formal and decorative inspiration in design stands at the heart of Majorelle's work, a lesson learned from the study of Japanese art.

Louis Comfort Tiffany designer

United States 1848–1933

Tiffany Furnaces, Corona, New York

manufacturer

United States 1902–31

Jack-in-the-pulpit, vase

c. 1913

glass (*favrile*)

Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Australian Consolidated Industries Limited, Governor, 1981

D81-1981

Louis Comfort Tiffany was an American glass artist who enjoyed great success in Europe. He was deeply interested in the art of Japan and became a leading exponent of Art Nouveau. *Jack-in-the-pulpit, vase* demonstrates how Tiffany's work moved beyond the imitation of exotic Japanese motifs to a more profound understanding of Japanese aesthetics. The swelling, rounded forms of the vase are inspired by, but do not copy, natural plant forms, while the iridescent colours of the favrile glass evoke the wings of an insect.

Alphonse Mucha

Czechoslovakia 1860–1939, worked in France 1887–1904, 1936–38

At the Latin Quarter (cover for students' magazine)

Au Quartier Latin

1897

colour lithograph

Purchased, 1970

P66-1970

One of the most sought-after artists of his time, Alphonse Mucha was a painter, sculptor, photographer, graphic artist and designer of everything from theatre sets to jewellery. A master of Art Nouveau, Mucha achieved international fame at the Paris 1900 International Exhibition, where he assisted with the design of the Austrian and Bosnia-Herzegovina pavilions. This design for a journal cover depicts a female personification of the working-class Paris suburb known as the Latin Quarter. The woman's luxurious hair is rendered as repetitive, ornamental swirls, flattened and abstracted, while the cover's text becomes an integral part of the pictorial design.

Eugène Grasset

Switzerland 1841–1917, worked in France 1871–1917

The four-leaf clover brand by Georges Richard, cycles and automobiles *Le trèfle à 4 feuilles de la marque Georges Richard, cycles et automobiles*

1899

poster: colour lithograph

Purchased, 1970

P65-1970

Eugène Grasset, a Swiss-born artist who worked in France, produced some of the most striking commercial posters of the 1890s. *The four-leaf clover* was the trademark of the bicycle and automobile firm of Georges Richard, which the poster is advertising. Grasset depicts a modern young woman, her hair free and unconstrained, accompanied by her bicycle, a vehicle that did much to facilitate the liberty and independence of women in the late nineteenth century. Grasset's flat graphic style shows familiarity with the art of Japanese woodblock prints and the bold typography, designed by Grasset himself, contributes to the sense of modernity.

Tiffany Studios, Corona, New York

parent company

United States 1902–32

Tiffany Furnaces, Corona, New York

manufacturer

United States 1902–31

Clara Driscoll designer

United States 1861–1944

Wisteria, table lamp

c. 1903–05

glass (*favrile*), bronze, electrical components

Purchased, NGV Women's Association, 2018

The dripping panicles of this wisteria shade evoke a deep sense of naturalism and pay homage to the Japanese reverence for the wisteria flower. *Wisteria, table lamp*, was one of Tiffany's most ambitious and successful designs. Each example was unique in its colour spectrum, with some evoking the deep, saturated purple colours of mature blossoms and others having a softer palette. Some, like the present example, referenced both ends of the spectrum with rich cobalt, ultramarine and mauve, contrasted with pale lavender and pearly white shades.

New Acquisition

Paul Follot designer

France 1877–1941

F. W. Quist, Esslingen am Neckar

manufacturer

Germany 1866–1988

Tea and coffee service

c. 1902 designed

silver-plated metal

Purchased with funds donated by Peter and Ivanka Canet, 2017

2017.1023.a-f

New acquisition

Paul Follot, a student of Eugène Grasset, was a leading Parisian designer of objects, furniture and interiors during the first decades of the twentieth century. This silver-plated tea and coffee service designed for the German commercial metalware firm of F. W. Quist is a study in the sinuous lines and organic forms of Art Nouveau. The shapes of the service – with radial lines splaying out from the spouts and handles and terminating in scallop-shaped profiles at their rims and bases – evoke aquatic forms such as fish or shells. The tray features similarly abstracted plant-like motifs.

Rozenburg Plateelfabriek, The Hague manufacturer

The Netherlands 1883–1916

Samuel Schellink decorator

The Netherlands 1876–1958

Coffee pot

c. 1902

porcelain

Felton Bequest, 1980

D395.a-b-1980

Arguably, the finest porcelains ever made in the Art Nouveau style are those produced by the Dutch Rozenburg factory in The Hague. Introduced in 1899 under art director J. Juriaan Kok, the famous ‘eggshell’ porcelain is unmatched for its thinness, its daringly flamboyant shapes and the minute delicacy of its painted decoration. The sweeping lines of this coffee pot are reminiscent of forms found in Meiji-period Japanese bronzes, while the graceful decoration employs a soft, refined palette to render sinuous plant tendrils and other nature-inspired motifs, including an elongated praying mantis, on the handle.

Gallé, Nancy manufacturer

France 1871–1931

Clematis, vase

c. 1890–1900

glass (acid-etched)

Purchased, 1975

D71-1975

Emile Gallé was the pre-eminent French Art Nouveau glass artist. His dual interests in botany and chemistry found expression through his poetic glassworks that combined supremely innovative technical accomplishment with a profound sensitivity to the plants, birds and insects of the countryside in his native Lorraine, in north-eastern France. This *Vase*, wrapped in trailing clematis vine, betrays the influence of Japanese art on Gallé through its form, which resembles a hanging paper lantern.

Louis Comfort Tiffany designer

United States 1848–1933

Tiffany Furnaces, Corona, New York

manufacturer

United States 1902–31

Millefiori, vase

c. 1910

glass (*favrile*)

Purchased, 1997

1997.65

Verrerie de Nancy, Nancy manufacturer

France 1878–1925

Vase

1905–10

glass

Purchased, 1975

D74-1975

Progressive Western artists admired the respect for humble materials shown by Japanese craftsmen. Glass, an inexpensive medium, became one of the key creative vehicles by which Art Nouveau artists gave form to their ideas about new art for a modern world. The French town of Nancy became an important centre for Art Nouveau glass, and the Verrerie de Nancy manufactory, founded by the Daum brothers, was, after the Gallé firm, the most significant manufacturer. Close observation of the natural world, a touchstone for Japanese art, informs the depiction on this *Vase* of a blackberry thicket in acid etching and translucent enamels.

Australian Japonisme

The influence of Japonisme began to be felt in Australian art in the 1880s, inspired in part by the many artists who travelled to France to study. Australian artists, like their compatriots in Europe and the Americas, adopted the radical forms, cropped figures, flat colours and unique compositions that characterised Japanese woodblock printing to form a distinctly Australian style. Naturally, printmakers also viewed these Japanese woodblocks and by the early 1900s began to adopt their technique and compositional structure in their own work. The distinctive characteristics of the Japanese woodblock tradition can be clearly seen in the work of the Australian artists displayed here.

Frances Derham

Australia 1894–1987

Stencil of pinecones and needles

1927

metallic inks on stencil

Gift of Mr Richard Hodgson Derham, 1988

P43-1988

Frances Derham was a leading children's art educationalist and friend of Australian printmaker Ethel Spowers. Derham's father was a consulting engineer for the Burley-Griffins and her own art was influenced by the American architects. This stencil created by Derham is derived from the Japanese *katagami*, a traditional stencil used in the printing of textiles.

Ethleen Palmer

South Africa 1908–65, arrived Australia 1921

The fantail

1930–36

colour linocut, ed. 1/30

Purchased, 1936

329-4

Ethleen Palmer was dubbed ‘the Australian Hokusai’ in an *Art in Australia* article published in 1939. The Japanese spirit of this beautifully subtle linocut extends to the *mon*-like artist’s monogram in the upper right-hand corner.

Helen Ogilvie

Australia 1902–93

Chooks in the straw

1932

colour linocut, ed. 6/50

Felton Bequest, 1934

117-4

The linocut technique was particularly popular in interwar Australia, especially among female artists attracted by the ease of cutting the linoleum and the cheapness of the materials. Melbourne artist Helen Ogilvie's popular *Chooks in the straw* references Japanese prints in both composition and subject matter.

Murray Griffin

Australia 1903–92

Magpies

1932

colour linocut, ed. 3/25

Purchased, 1933

4693-3

Murray Griffin

Australia 1903–92

Magpies

1935

colour linocut, ed. 8/17

Purchased, 1940

1088-4

Murray Griffin

Australia 1903–92

End of day

1934

colour linocut on buff paper, ed. 5/11

Purchased, 1934

210-4

Murray Griffin

Australia 1903–92

Regent bower birds

1932

colour linocut, ed. 3/17

Purchased, 1932

4692-3

Murray Griffin

Australia 1903–92

The white one

1933

colour linocut, ed. 6/12

Felton Bequest, 1934

137-4

In his teens, Murray Griffin studied briefly at the National Gallery School in Melbourne before he began work as a commercial artist. He began to experiment with printmaking in the 1920s, becoming more seriously committed to the technique in the early 1930s. He quickly established a reputation as one of Australia's most innovative and modern printmakers. Griffin identified Japanese woodblock prints, as well as the work of the Austrian artist Norbertine Bresslern-Roth, as major influences on his work.

A. B. Webb

England/Australia 1887–1944, arrived Australia 1915

The fisherman, misty morning

1920s

colour woodcut, ed. 15/50

Felton Bequest, 1933

99-4

A. B. Webb

England/Australia 1887–1944, arrived Australia 1915

Sunshine and shadow

c. 1921–24

colour woodcut, ed. 34/50

Felton Bequest, 1933

97-4

A. B. Webb studied at the St Martin's School of Art and The City and Guilds of London Art School before migrating to Perth, Western Australia in 1915 for health reasons. He produced a significant number of colour woodcuts printed in the Japanese manner throughout the 1920s, possibly inspired by the collection of Japanese prints in the Art Gallery of Western Australia, which were acquired in 1903 from the Imperial Museum in Tokyo. Five of Webb's prints, including *Sunshine and shadow*, were illustrated in the leading British art and design journal, *The Studio*, in 1926.

Geraldine Rede

Australia 1874–1943

A Little Book of Trees

published by Sign of the Rabbit, Melbourne
1909

artist's book: colour woodcut, hand-coloured
woodcut and letterpress, [24] pages, paper cover, silk
ribbon binding

Gift of Terence Lane, 1977

P4-1977

Geraldine Rede was an illustrator and regarded as one of Australia's first professional female artists, despite little being known of her life. Her book of woodcuts and verse, *A Little Book of Trees*, was published in 1909, four years after her collaboration with Violet Teague on *Night Fall in the Ti-Tree*. The spare treatment of many of the woodcuts illustrating Australian native flora show Japanese compositional principles applied to uniquely Australian content. The book's cover demonstrates dramatic use of negative space to delineate both text and a night-time bush landscape.

Geraldine Rede

Australia 1874–1943

Flowering wattle

from *A Little Book of Trees*

1909

hand-coloured woodcut

Gift of Terence Lane, 1977

P6-1977

Geraldine Rede

Australia 1874–1943

Branch of wattle

from *A Little Book of Trees*

1909

woodcut

Gift of Terence Lane, 1977

P8-1977

Geraldine Rede

Australia 1874–1943

Native cherry branch

from *A Little Book of Trees*

1909

hand-coloured woodcut

Gift of Terence Lane, 1977

P7-1977

Geraldine Rede

Australia 1874–1943

Banksia

from *A Little Book of Trees*

1909

hand-coloured woodcut

Gift of Terence Lane, 1977

P5-1977

Violet Teague

Australia 1872–1951

Geraldine Rede

Australia 1874–1943

‘And so, little rabbits...’

from **Night Fall in the Ti-Tree**

1905

artist’s book: colour woodcut, letterpress, 16 pages,
printed paper cover, silk ribbon binding

Purchased from Trustees Funds, 1992

P161-1992

And So, Little Rabbits..., by the Melbourne artist Violet Teague, in collaboration with her friend Geraldine Rede, comes from a Japanese-style book of verse entitled *Night Fall in the Ti Tree*. It was exhibited widely and won an award at the *First Australian Exhibition of Women’s Work* in Melbourne in 1907. Teague was the first Australian artist to demonstrate a sustained interest in, and an understanding of, Japanese woodblock printing. This book is also the first example of colour relief printing in Australia.

Violet Teague

Australia 1872–1951

Geraldine Rede

Australia 1874–1943

‘And so, little rabbits...’

from *Night Fall in the Ti-Tree*

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artist’s book: colour woodcut, letterpress, 16 pages,
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