

Japonisme: Japan and the Birth of Modern Art

25 May – 28 October 2018 | NGV International | FREE



In 1854, Japan opened its borders to international trade following a long period of self-imposed isolation. The resulting influx of Japanese artworks into Europe triggered an artistic revolution, known as Japonisme, that helped to lay the foundations of Western modern art.

The never-before-seen Japanese objects and boldly-coloured woodblock prints offered dynamic new possibilities for European artists and craftspeople, who adopted elements of the visual language of Japanese art in order to forge a new European art aesthetic.

Japonisme: Japan and the Birth of Modern Art draws from works from the National Gallery of Victoria's collection to explore this period in art history through exquisite examples of Western decorative arts, works on paper, paintings, fashion and textiles, photography as well as Japanese art.

Exhibition highlights include Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's iconic *Divan Japonais* poster, examples from the 1866 Bracquemond-Rousseau dinner service, and a sinuous Art Nouveau display cabinet designed by Louise Majorelle, showcasing the influence of Japanese aesthetics on French furniture.

The exhibition looks at the Japanese reverence for the natural world and the ways in which this theme was transposed into European art. It will also showcase a range of decorative arts that reference these key Japanese themes, including flora, fauna and the landscape. Such objects emulate a Japanese regard for organic forms, vibrant colours and sensual textures derived from nature.

A further highlight of the exhibition is an evocation of a British domestic interior that will illuminate the influence of Japanese art and design principles on British Aestheticism, an art and design reform movement championed by the likes of architect and designer Edward William Godwin, artist James McNeill Whistler and critic Oscar Wilde.

Tony Ellwood, Director, NGV said, 'The fervor for Japanese art and design in Europe and America, a phenomenon known as Japonisme, forever changed art and design in the West and had a major impact on the practices of artists of the day, including Vincent Van Gogh. This exhibition offers visitors the opportunity to explore this period in history and appreciate the influential legacy of Japanese visual culture around the world.'

Japonisme: Japan and the Birth of Modern Art is on display from 25 May – 28 October 2018 at NGV International, 180 St Kilda Road, Melbourne. Entry is FREE. Further information is available from the NGV website NGV.MELBOURNE.

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IMAGE CAPTION: Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, France 1864–1901, *Divan Japonais* 1893, colour lithograph, 78.5 x 59.5 cm (image and sheet), Felton Bequest, 1948 (1846-4)