

The Arts of Japan in a Global Context: Beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism

Panelists

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 Dr. Anne Nishimura Morse (William and Helen Pounds Senior Curator of Japanese Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)
 Dr. Akiko Yano (Mitsubishi Corporation Curator (Japanese Collections), Japanese Section, Department of Asia, The British Museum)
 Ms. Wibke Schrape (East Asian Department Head, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg)
 Dr. Ainura Yusupova (Senior Curator, Oriental Paintings and Prints, The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts)
 Mr. Atsushi Imai (Supervisor of Research, Curatorial Research Department, Tokyo National Museum)

Moderator

Ryusuke Asami

Ryusuke Asami was born in Tokyo in 1964 and earned his Masters from the Graduate School of Letters, Keio University, in 1988. He worked at the Kamakura Kokuhoukan Museum from 1987 and then held the following positions at the National Museums: Temporary Exhibitions Section, Planning Division, Curatorial Department, Tokyo National Museum (TNM); Sculpture Section, Fine Arts Division, Curatorial Department, TNM; Senior Manager, Publications Sections, Curatorial Planning Department, Curatorial Planning Division, TNM; Senior Manager, Education Programming Section, Education Division, Curatorial Planning Department, TNM; Senior Manager, Registration Section, Curatorial Department, Kyoto National Museum (KNM); Chief Curator and Chair, Curatorial Division, Department of Exhibitions and Public Relations, KNM; and Supervisor, Planning Division, Curatorial Planning Department, TNM.

He specializes in the history of Japanese sculpture and has curated a number of exhibitions including *Kamakura: The Origins of Zen* (2003), *Zen Treasures from the Kyoto Gozan Temples* (2007), *Enku's Buddhas: Sculptures from Senkoji Temple and the Hida Region* (2013), and *UNKEI: The Great Master of Buddhist Sculpture* (2017). His publications include "Zenshu no Chokoku (Sculpture of the Zen Sect)." *Nihon no Bijutsu*, No. 507; 2008 and "Characteristics of Zen Priest Portrait Sculpture." *Kokka*, No. 1308; 2004.

Asami Our theme is "an understanding of Japan that goes beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism," but as I had only a passing familiarity with the term "Occidentalism," I was frankly concerned about my ability to moderate. So a few weeks ago, I went to a bookstore to see if there was any relevant work. Global history seems to have become a very popular idea in the history field, and I ended up purchasing works from that area. There are some gaps here with so-called "global issues," so I'd like to take a moment to sort through the terminology.

First off, we in Japan are quick to use the word "gaikoku (foreign country)" but as a term that literally means "outside country," it's not a particularly good one. Until fairly recently, "kokusaika (internationalization)" was invoked whenever people from many nations gathered for a discussion. But the word "kokusaika" seems to have fallen out of use these days. "Kokusaika" contained an assumption of a border between nations and between peoples, and indicated a will to deepen these relationships and understand one another better.

The word that has become more popular in the recent years is "gurobaru-ka (globalization)." Terms like "global history" is a part of this trend. This term suggests an elimination of national borders, the idea of transcending boundaries and considering

our whole planet as a unified world.

On a separate note, Dr. Morse referred earlier to Edward Said's work, "Orientalism," published during what was still the colonial era when the East was viewed from the European viewpoint. The term "Orientalism" as defined by Said is a view of the East that was negative and dismissive in the sense of seeing the East as less developed and more regressive than Western culture, but also having an element of veneration for what was seen as lack of corruption through cultural development and preservation of highly valuable aspects. All in all, Said's definition of "Orientalism" appears to be concerned with uninformed assessment of Eastern countries by Europeans.

In contrast, "Occidentalism," is leveled by the East against Europe. A familiar example would be a claim that because seasonal differences are so marked in Japan, the Japanese have an intimate relationship with nature that is different from how Europeans and North Americans—who have been corrupted by cultural development—relate to nature. This is the sort of viewpoint that leads to Occidentalism.

These problems with viewpoint indicate a failure to truly understand the Orientalist viewpoint. *Ukiyo-e* is praiseworthy because, as the message from the main organizer noted, Europeans praised it. Well and good, but would *ukiyo-e* not be praiseworthy if Europeans hadn't praised the genre? I would say that is not the case at all. We heard today from a number of presenters about the importance of understanding each other unambiguously and having respect for different perspectives.

We need a quick review at this point to check everyone's understanding, since the morning session did not cover the major premise of the discussion. Mr. Imai, who originated the idea of this symposium, will take us through this topic.

Imai I know that the title of the discussion is convoluted and not easy to parse. The reason for going the extra mile and adding "Occidentalism" to the mix is that if we had called it "an understanding of Japan that goes beyond Orientalism," it would seem to declare Occidentalism as the answer and a pitchfork mob of European and American Japanese art historians would descend on us. Since that would not be a good outcome, we chose to include "Occidentalism" as a way of emphasizing a mutual need for recognition.

Right now, museums are taking a variety of initiatives to respond to coreign visitors expected for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. I have an impression, however, that these initiatives begin and end with technical details such as multilingualization and disabled access. What we need foremost is a venue for discussing the content. How has Japan been seen by the non-Japanese? How is it seen now? What kinds of things are expected of Japan? And in contrast, how does Japan want to be seen? I chose the present theme because I felt there is a need to explore these issues.

I consider it highly problematic that there is an idea of Japanese art as something that sits in the Far East of the world and that only the Japanese can understand it. This belief is the same as insisting that Japan is a whole different world utterly alien to the West. It is also problematic to believe that being simply Japanese confers a special advantage in understanding Japanese art. That is no different from saying that the image of Japan held by Europeans and Americans is fundamentally different from the "real" Japan.

The global standing of the British Museum is not decided by the mere fact that its curator of Japanese art, Dr. Yano, happens to be Japanese. Does it ensure a globalized perspective if Indian art is curated by an Indian and Chinese art by a Chinese, with each competing to be heard over the other? I do not think so. I believe we need to be fully conscious of the fact that a Japanese curator of Japanese art at the Tokyo National Museum (hereinafter "TNM") faces the same issues as Dr. Yano in the British Museum.

Asami Thank you, Mr. Imai. Since we don't want to get lost in the theoretical realm, let's now move into specifics. Dr. Morse presented earlier on how a diverse group formed a team and worked together to plan the 2015 exhibit "Made in the Americas." Dr. Morse, can you talk more specifically about that?

Morse I should mention that I was not involved throughout the whole of the process since *Made in the Americas* was planned over a very long time by our curator of American art, Dennis Carr. But it is true that curators from a variety of departments came together for discussion and consultation. The organizing curator visited Japan as well and consulted with our colleagues at the Kyoto National Museum (hereinafter "KNM"). The exhibit planning brought together not only museum professionals but also academics, Asian art experts from a number of countries, , and experts in Latin American and North American art and European and Islamic art.

In the U.S. when applying for funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, there is a stipulation that researchers from other academic fields, not just curators, be involved in the planning. For that reason, our museum held several conferences. This is a very productive process because it enables curators to discuss their ideas with other experts who approach the topic from a variety of perspectives. By participating in these conferences, we were able to stimulate conversations that greatly contributed to the content of the exhibition. I think it was right that the show was planned by a "community" in the true sense of the word, rather than just by curators, through including people from many different fields.

Asami The title "Made in the Americas" refers to objects produced in the Americas. Does that include works that were influenced by Asian works of art that were brought to North and South America in the 16th century?

Morse This exhibition consistently emphasized that when we say "the Americas," we include the continents of South America and North America, rather than just the United States. It also explained how imports from India, China, Japan, and Central Asia influenced motifs, inspirations, and techniques. I think this was a real surprise to many people, because while everyone knew quite a bit about the impact of Chinese material and Japanese material on Europe, not many people knew the extent of Asian influence on the Americas.

Asami Jesuit missionaries came to Japan and went back and forth between Europe and Japan—or rather, to places like Goa and Manila. The Jesuits also traveled to Mexico. I find myself wondering if this was a part of how Japanese objects migrated westward, what their routes of travel were. I was one of those who knew almost nothing about the presence of Japanese artifacts in the Americas, and it was a great surprise. Though Mr. Imai did say that Imari ware had gone West.

Imai In recent years, scholars of Japanese ceramics have been able to extend their focus to the Americas. Their work has made clear that Imari ware was exported to Central and South America via the Pacific trade.

Asami "Made in the Americas" is an example of an exhibition founded on cooperation, including from Japan.

Next, Ms. Schrape of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg brought up the word "transcultural" in her presentation. This is something distinct from either Ori-

entalism or Occidentalism. Ms. Schrape, if you could tell us more about that.

Schrape The idea of “transcultural” is challenging and defies easy explanation, but I’ll try. What I attempted to communicate earlier was that culture is not a fixed thing. No culture is regionally determined, nor is it frozen in time, unchanging. Culture changes continuously. For example, when we say “Japanese culture,” we may have a personal idea of what that means in mind. This personal approach isn’t necessarily negative. It just means that when we think of a particular culture, our idea is always one of many constituent parts. Culture only operates when there are many actors, just as society consists of many actors. In holding an exhibition on Japanese culture, we have images of Japanese art in our head when we start creating the exhibition. The participating actors – including curators – engage in a transcultural negotiation of Japanese culture in the exhibition.

For example, my special field is Rinpa art so my example deals with the construction of Rinpa. There were two exhibitions in 2015 that marked the 400th anniversary of the Rinpa school, an American exhibition on Sōtatsu at the Freer Gallery and the “400 Years of Rinpa” exhibition at the Kyoto National Museum (hereinafter “KNM”). Both exhibitions focused on the beginning of Rinpa. Yet, the American framework is that of an individual success story, a kind of American Dream. To exaggerate: the image is something like Sōtatsu was practically a dishwasher but became famous as an amazing artistic giant. In contrast, the KNM offered a different story, a story for Japanese people: four centuries ago, the Rinpa school had its heyday and became a school of national importance after Sōtatsu’s death. Thus both exhibitions negotiated completely different images of the same story, namely the beginning of Rinpa.

These images also change quite a bit. Only after combining all the multiple images and ideas, rather than using just one image, can we get a complete picture and understand what Rinpa is. I emphasize that none of the individual approaches is wrong, but all of these actors and notions engaged in transcultural negotiation should be taken into account.

Conceptually, “transcultural” means that you are all actors and act as mediators for cultures. Curators are also mediators, but in fact, so are visitors. Visitors approach artworks with their own understanding and framework in mind. For example, each person reads museum labels in a different way and interprets them in a certain way.

Asami The “Inky Bytes” exhibition was planned with this idea of the “transcultural” in mind. What kind of time went into assembling the concept behind “Inky Bytes”? Any specifics you can provide would be appreciated.

Schrape This exhibition on stone-rubbing in Hamburg, which I spoke about earlier, was not planned in a long run. It was in December 2017 that the opportunity to realize the exhibition arose at a town-hall meeting. That was in December 2017 and the exhibition opened in September 2018, so we only spent nine months on the planning and realization. We were able to do this because everyone who participated was enthusiastic about it. It would have been better if we’d had more time to prepare.

Asami Let’s hear from Dr. Yano next. We understand that since 2006, a number of participants advised on the project to launch the Mitsubishi Corporation Japanese Galleries at the British Museum. I think we would all like to hear about that in greater detail.

Yano I wasn’t with the British Museum in 2006, so my answer will have to be based

on what I've heard and read. I know that I did hear a bit of the discussion at least a year and a half prior, about what kind of compositional renewal the Japan gallery should undergo, because I was working as a School of Asian Studies (SOAS) research assistant on-site at the British Museum when the exhibition on Ōsaka kabuki was held in 2005, a year before the renovation. I've heard that decisions were made through discussions among the curator of the Japanese section of the British Museum, academics, particularly those from the Humanities from the SOAS, which is a hub of Japanese studies at University of London next door, and further afield, curators from the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan. So this was not an exhibition that was assembled by British Museum curators using pieces from the museum's collection. What I've heard is that this Japan Gallery (which has been passed down to the present day) was structured from many different viewpoints, that is, the viewpoints of non-curators engaged in research on Japan, through many discussions that even looked at how proposals from the British side on certain exhibits might be received by Japan, what the reaction might be. The result was very much a collaborative project.

Asami One of the things Dr. Yano spoke about was that in a Japanese exhibition space, statues of Buddha or deities are displayed within the framework of sculptural art as objects of worship. At the TNM, we tend not to do a lot of displays that suggest worship. I've noticed that at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the displays have the feel of a sanctum.

Morse At our museum, we have a strong awareness of Buddhism as very much a living faith. We have the Temple Room, where visitors often meditate or offer prayers. However, there are also visitors who see Buddhist images as just sculptures.

There is also a new project at the Museum of Fine Arts; our Conservation Department is treating our Buddhist statues in a space where their daily work can be observed by the public. At the same time, we are seizing this opportunity to rethink the Temple Room in a number of ways.

We are conducting research into how best to interpret Buddhist art for our audiences. In tandem with the Education Department we are conducting focus groups to test several forms of labeling. Right now, we are using conventional labeling with comments by curators and conservators. We are also considering using VR (Virtual Reality) to provide architectural and ritual contextual information and detailed examinations of the individual images. However, we are concerned that this might be too much technology and lead to a loss of respect for the Buddhist statues.

We are also involved in technical research in dialogue with Japanese curators and conservators. We would like to gather as much information as possible, but we do not yet know what we will include in the interpretation for the public.

Asami I urge everyone to see it since today is Friday; the sculptures room on the first floor of the main building currently has a standing bodhisattva statue on display, a beautiful statue that perhaps represents what the TNM is about. This statue has two notable characteristics. One is *gyokugan*, which is a technique of using rock crystal to create eyes that are quite lifelike. This technique was developed in late Heian period and became extremely popular from the Kamakura period, and is used in a large number of Buddha statues. But the bodhisattva currently on display also has rock crystal inlaid in the lips, which makes it quite rare. Only three Buddha statues in Japan are known to have crystal lips. Because the crystal is not noticeable unless looked at very closely, the explanatory material explicitly notes that the lips are inlaid with crystal. As to why the

inlaying was done, lack of text space meant that we just noted that the technique was used as a way of achieving a realistic effect. I don't think that's really understandable for most foreign visitors who are seeing a Buddha statue like this for the first time. The statue is not "realistic" in the sense of Gandharan or Greek statues with their musculature, and some aspects of it don't look at all like a live human being.

Another characteristic of this bodhisattva statue is that it does not stand up straight, with each foot on a different stand. The norm for a standing statue like this is a single flat stand, but this statue is depicting as a walking figure. Here again, we see the intent to portray lifelikeness, but as to why such a Buddha statue was made, that would be difficult for the visitors to understand without some guidance on history of religion and background information on the period. That brings us to the issue of how much text we should be displaying. Lately, the TNM is seeing an increased number of foreign visitors. It would be easier for us to not explain very much and ask that these statues be seen as works of sculpture, but is that really the right choice? What kind of guidance gives visitors the opportunity to be moved by a carefully crafted Buddha statue?

Earlier, Dr. Yano mentioned being flexible about changing the length of explanatory materials—perhaps increasing them for exhibits that are attracting more attention—and things like changing the color of the museum label, or having a two-way communication with the interpretation team in order to make explanations more understandable. I found it quite fascinating. I imagine that it's a lot of work writing museum texts at the British Museum, with so many exhibition themes and exhibit turnovers—is that the case?

Yano Before talking about museum labels, I'd like to continue the subject of the Buddha statue as a worship object.

Museums handle a variety of cultures. Rather than seeing Buddha statues as sculpture, our museum would like to be sensitive to the issue of how our display of Buddha statues is perceived by people among whom these statues originated. I understand that at the TNM, Buddha statues from Japan are exhibited as works of sculpture. My example is not from Japan, but there is a moai statue in our museum. These statues are sacred to the people of Easter Island, and there was a wish expressed to make an offering. Until then, the display had consisted of just the statue on a large plinth, but as a direct result of someone communicating a desire to make an offering, the moai statue was recently exhibited with an offering placed before it. This is an example of the need to be considerate of the original story. Today, there is a desire on the part of museums not to be seen as institutions that have co-opted another culture and believe it to be theirs. This is where I was coming from when I said that Buddha statues are objects of worship.

Also, in the manga exhibition I discussed earlier, there was one work that showed Jesus Christ and Buddha rooming together. This may be a fun and funny premise for us, but we had intense discussions about this selection right up to the exhibition opening—whether we should go ahead with this exhibit, if that was truly the right choice. The exhibition is in the spirit of striving to retain this sort of perspective—or rather, it's very much from that perspective.

As for museum labels, as previously mentioned, our museum has a specialized department called Interpretation. The Interpretation department always looks at every museum text to be displayed inside the British Museum. It's not a unilateral process where the text goes from Interpretation to curators. Instead, there are several rounds of exchanges. We send them the text we've written, they send a revised draft, we take another look, and there's a back-and-forth until both sides are satisfied down to every last word. It's naturally time-consuming. That's why every exhibition planning has a built-in schedule specifying when the label text should be provided to Interpretation,

when it should come back by, and when the second draft should go back to them. As a rule, we set aside plenty of time for this process.

Asami How many people are in the Interpretation department?

Yano It's smaller than you'd think. I think it's a team of four right now.

Asami Are they able to manage because some exhibitions don't change their exhibits very much? I've heard the British Museum has 100 different exhibition rooms.

Yano That's true—exhibits don't turn over as often as they do in Japanese museums. In the Japan Gallery, we're told not to do too many exhibit changes because the economic situation has been difficult. So woodblock exhibits are changed out four times a year and paintings twice a year. Crafted objects may well end up staying on display for two years. It seems they're able to manage with just four or so Interpretation staff members because there aren't too many changes to the exhibits.

Asami Ms. Yusupova, I understand that the recent exhibition on Edo period art was a great success. How many visitors did your museum have?

Yusupova We had 127,000 visitors to the exhibition, 47,000 of them in the first four weeks. When the second part of the exhibition was held in October, the visitor number doubled. It's very rare to hold an exhibition for as long as eight weeks, but we received complaints that eight weeks was far too short, so we extended it to three months. The non-exhibition visitors also expressed surprise at how short it was.

But visitors were shocked to discover that "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" was missing from the second show. They hadn't expected that the exhibits would change. It's highly unusual to exhibit Japanese art at all, and in fact, some at our museum felt the exhibition shouldn't be held.

Asami A special exhibition at an art museum, if it's built mainly around paintings and prints, would display each work for around four weeks. Some work on loan from another institution might be restricted to two or three weeks, so an eight-week exhibition would pose a challenge. At our museum, regular exhibits are changed every six weeks. So for example, a visitor who wants to see "Shōrin-zu byōbu" will have to plan quite a ways ahead in order to visit the museum when the work is on display. These are some of the problems that arise.

Ms. Yusupova, when you exhibit Japanese art for the Russian audience, what are some things for explanation you are mindful of?

Yusupova A number of Japanese terms were used as-is in catalogs and museum labels, because they are very difficult to translate into Russian. We created something like a glossary too, and that was also time-consuming. Translating every term makes the text longer and longer, and that was the hardest problem to solve in making the catalog. It was simple with paintings and prints, but difficult with ceramic and lacquerware pieces because they are more complicated. We needed to invite a chadō expert to guide us through all the terms.

Imai I have a question for Ms. Yusupova. I've heard that the "Raku: The Cosmos in a Tea Bowl" exhibition was hugely successful, but my impression is that many Russians

have very little prior knowledge of *chanoyu* or traditional Japanese aesthetics. I'm sure that was true of the children who participated in the workshops. What was the reaction from the audience? Did it seem as though an explanation was necessary for the audience to understand? Or was the audience able to feel something without needing it to be explained?

Yusupova We involved academic experts from the start in planning the tearoom and began preparations six months prior to the exhibition with assistance from the Japan Foundation. Eight lectures were held on *chadō*, and we also invited an Urasenke-school tea master to Moscow to hold guided *chanoyu* demonstrations at both the State Hermitage Museum and our museum, almost on a weekly basis. The explanations were very thorough and we had very positive visitor feedback.

We did have a surprise, however. Because this exhibition had a challenging theme, we were not expecting it to be a strong audience draw. But there was feedback in the visitors' book that said, "I came to this exhibition 49 times." That's every day of the exhibition.

Another heartening thing was an article in a newspaper published on Fridays that did a comparative review of Raku ware with the work of a Paris-based Vietnamese jewelry designer. The specialness of Raku ware is what led the reviewer to compare them with jewels. I thought this was a strong positive sign that people were able to understand the nature of Raku ware.

We only issued a special ticket for the Edo exhibition. This is because of the expectation that the Raku ware exhibition would not sell many tickets. Since Caravaggio is from the same century, we thought it might be a good idea to compare Caravaggio's paintings from Venice with Raku ware. It was an interesting happenstance.

Schrabe Let me comment on the issue of labels from before. I think multiple interpretations are in fact necessary. A label is only one of many means of explanation. In my opinion, the museum label should only provide basic information, and more detailed information should be interpreted to individual visitors in various ways such as hand-outs or apps or access to the museum database. For example, when I go to an exhibition with my family and we all see the same painting, we all approach it differently. My child approaches an artwork differently from me. I start by reading the label. My husband finds it exciting to approach the same painting in digital form via a museum app. Multiple ways to access exhibits increase the communication methods and the communication in the gallery. I think a label is something that provides only the basic information on the artwork, it does not need to explain everything. If someone would like to know more, they can do a Google search or get information on Wikipedia in a minute and in more detail. Plenty of information on Raku ware, for instance, is provided on the internet for people eager to learn more. I don't think we need to write many things on the museum label. We should really reflect what we need to communicate. These days, everyone can acquire knowledge easily but exhibiting works with information creates a specific situation of experience.

For example, if labels provide information of the inventory number, visitors can look it up in the online museum collection once they are at home. Thus what we should put on the label is basic information, information reflecting the circumstance of the exhibition and access information to enable visitors to get more information. In conclusion, I would keep the texts in English and all other languages short.

Morse I would also like to comment on labels. A colleague of mine, a specialist on

Islamic art, experimented with something quite successfully. She was concerned about the negative image of the Quran in public discourse and decided to place sections of the Quran on display. She asked members of the Muslim community to write the explanations. I think that was quite valuable, because it was not the curator unilaterally explaining the significance of the sections, but many different people explaining their thoughts as they related to the Quran. Labels should not be textbooks, but as Ms. Schrape pointed out, the label should empower the visitor to engage the object, to begin a transaction. The label should be something that enables visitors to be aware of themselves as participants. If people are limited to just reading, it necessarily becomes a passive task. We should create museum labels that allow visitors to be active.

Asami I also think constantly about the active role of visitors. When museum visitors take an interest and take action such as looking something up themselves, then it really becomes a part of them. If all they do is read, they might just forget it later. I suppose that your museums have a system that allows visitors to search by exhibit ID to acquire more information on a work on display. The TNM has yet to do this, and we need to really work on that. There is nothing to be gained from keeping display information to a minimum if more information is not accessible.

Also, I think we've never done this at the TNM, but many of your museums seem to display older works and contemporary works side by side. If we could hear more specifics...or rather, how was it done for "Lineage of Eccentrics," for example?

Morse We consulted with Takashi Murakami for the *Lineage of Eccentrics* exhibition, but in advance Professor Nobuo Tsuji and I selected a number of works from the MFA collection that we felt might be of interest to Murakami. I wanted to forefront Murakami's response to the individual works of art and the role that Professor Tsuji's ideas had played in Murakami's artistic development. One reason we organized the exhibition is that we did not want the public to think that Japanese art ended in the 19th century. And we have been very flexible in our thinking about who presents these works. I believe that it is not good for the curator to be the only expert and the only voice to be heard. For example, I think it was a positive contribution that we were able to effectively relate the story of how contemporary artists are influenced by past work, using resources such as Professor Tsuji's ideas, instead of taking the oft-assumed position that because the Japanese art is on display in a contemporary art gallery it has no connection to the past.

Due to our approach we drew a diverse audience for the exhibition. The visitors who came expressly to see Murakami's art tend to be people with absolutely no interest in traditional Japanese culture, but some ended up taking in the regular exhibits in the permanent Japanese galleries afterwards. On the other hand, visitors who love the quintessentially traditional Japanese art and believed they had zero interest in seeing Murakami's work also told us that ultimately they understood where the exhibition was coming from. It is not as though we can do something like this in all our projects, but to place a contemporary work in the gallery is to recognize the continued development of Japanese art. For that reason, I think it can be effective if the work is carefully selected and a skillful contrast is set up between the contemporary and the traditional. However, if it is not done carefully the display will look like a random mix of works.

Yusupova During the same time that the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston was holding this exhibition, the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow also had an exhibition on Mr. Murakami's work. The curator selected several works from our Japanese art collection for the exhibition, but needed to discuss it first with Mr. Murakami. It was

a difficult process, since there were works that didn't pass muster with Mr. Murakami. The curator made a careful selection and ultimately exhibited traditional Japanese paintings. Some woodblocks were also accepted, and the result was an exhibition that clearly showed the artistic lineage of Murakami's art. By displaying Murakami's art together with traditional art, the message becomes clearer. By having Murakami's art there, we learned what's going on in the 21st century. By having traditional work there, we learned about continuity. It was a great experience.

Asami I won't mention names as this hasn't been announced yet, but there will be an exhibition this spring where period and contemporary Japanese art will be displayed together. This idea was opposed by the Japanese staff at the institution. Their fear is that older artworks with their faded colors would struggle to make an impression next to high-impact contemporary art, which are large in scale and very colorful. I think we see things this way because we are not used to this style of display, but that's something we'll have to change.

Morse One has to believe that traditional Japanese art is truly powerful. It is also important to work with a designer who can provide a sensitive display. Murakami's dragon is much larger than Shōhaku's dragon at the MFA. But having them side-by-side made most people see the differences between them. The Shōhaku also has a real sense of speed. Murakami's dragon is bright red, and Shōhaku's is in ink. We see each of them individually. Please tell the TNM curators to believe in their art.

Asami I understand that there are currently new and old exhibits displayed together at the British Museum. Dr. Yano, any thoughts?

Yano This may be a repeat of Anne's point. I have only one or two examples this time. I think there are four or five instances where old and new works are exhibited together. It's not meaningful, though, if the context hasn't been thought through. One example I have is the exhibit on relations with the Kingdom of Ryūkyū via Satsuma, one of the four gateways to the outside world, which features a contemporary *bashōfu* textile by contemporary textile artist Toshiko Taira from Okinawa. The museum label here was shown in one of the slides earlier. It's backgrounded is black and features a photograph of Ms. Taira, indicating that the textile is created by this living, contemporary woman. I think that, in turn, makes it easier to understand, or rather, to access.

Also, in tracing back history to examine the place occupied by Okinawa, we see that Okinawa Prefecture of Japan was once the Kingdom of Ryūkyū, then put under Satsuma rule, and so on. Mapping the past gives us a chance to reflect on the course of history: the here and now, and what happened then and before. The same can be said of our Ainu section. At the British Museum, we do in fact actively seek out areas like these where the contexts match, and exhibit objects from the present and the past together.

Asami I also struggle sometimes to understand the boundary between the global perspective and the issue we are looking at today. How to overcome Orientalism and Occidentalism to exhibit and present Japanese art, what the exhibitions should be like, in concrete terms—these are not problems that we can quickly find the right answers to. There might be a limit to what we can do since there are many points of view, but I'd like to ask everyone to plan an exhibition.

One thing that occurs to me is that during the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, the High Museum of Art organized an exhibition called "Rings: Five Passions in World Art."

Seven works from Japan went on display, and I went to the museum to collect them. Thirty-nine countries had contributed a total of over a hundred works that are said to express five emotions including love, anguish, and joy. Because these human emotions are universal, there were works from many different countries. It was quite an interesting exhibition.

There was also an exhibition—I don't have the catalog on hand and can't say what kind of exhibits were on display—that focused on the years around 1492, when Columbus landed in the Americas, and gathered contemporaneous works from around the world and showed them together. I'm not sure if this ties into the theme of this symposium, but objects from multiple countries were exhibited together and from multiple perspectives. Since our panel consists of East Asian and Japanese art experts, I wonder if I could ask you to propose a display or an exhibition that places a bit more emphasis on Japanese art. I realize this is on short notice, but let's start with Mr. Imai.

Imai Looking at this in terms of the relationship between China and Japan, China has an Asian version of Orientalism called Hua–Yi distinction, and that was quite entrenched even into modernity. As a result, Japanese-made exhibits were rarely recognized on their own merit, even if they did evoke approval as excellent, even touching, feats of imitation. This year, an exhibition called “Cultures Learning from Each Other” was organized at the National Museum of China and I was asked to participate in exhibit selection. So I made several proposals. One was that Raku tea bowls were created in Japan by the offspring of a Chinese father, Ameya, and though the technique came from China, the bowls have an utterly different form. Another was that Oribe ware was also made following the introduction of advanced kiln technology from China, but has a uniquely Japanese design. I recommended them, but all of my proposals were turned down. Exhibits that promote understanding for Chinese audiences regarding creative or rather, active aspects of Japanese art—we try to be mindful of this with our permanent exhibits since the TNM has a lot of visitors from China, but we hope to do more with that in the future.

Asami The exhibitions don't need to be large ones. Ms. Schrape?

Schrape In 2004, on occasion of the Soccer World Cup held in Germany, there was an exhibition on “The Ball is Round: Circle, Sphere, Cosmos” that used exhibits from multiple museums in Berlin and even included an antique Chinese bi-disk, because it was round. For me, this is an ambiguous approach to commemorate an international sport event with an exhibition. In case of the Olympics 2020, it would be possible to start with something considered very Japanese and then use transcultural methods to reach further. For example, one obvious topic is nature and art. Japanese people take a lot of pride in the four seasons, and the seasons are a popular motif in Japanese art. However, the four seasons are nothing unique to Japanese culture. Many countries have seasons, so it might be possible to exhibit works related to different seasons from different countries.

We can reveal different ways and costumes in which we understand nature. People do dress according to the seasons—that is not unique to Japan.

For example, Christmas is not only a religious festival in Europe, but is related to the seasons. It takes place in the darkest and coldest time of the year. Christmas celebrates the gradual lengthening of the day right after the winter solstice. This is how I experience Christmas in Germany as a festival to overcome the gloom of dark and stormy winter days. Thus, even though is a Christian festival, it is related to the seasons.

Morse I cannot present the details yet, but we are planning an exhibition about the art of rulers, spanning many different cultures. The theme concerns how different types of authority figures expressed their power. We are thinking about how best to present an exhibition like this. The chief issue is that we want to provide information on multiple cultures but do not want to essentialize them. Another very important thing is that holding an exhibition in Japan means a lot of visitors. Therefore, the presentation needs may differ. But I feel very honored to have an opportunity like this. It is wonderful to be able to hold an exhibition on not just Japanese art but art from multiple cultures for the Olympics.

Yano Nothing comes to mind at the moment, but with the Olympics coming, it's a sound idea to explore some kind of a shared, worldwide theme. Something else did occur to me a few minutes ago, hearing about the exhibition of objects from around the world dating from the time Columbus arrived in the New World. In one respect, time seems like an objective, fair unit of measure, but I wonder if it's always meaningful to take a slice of the world at a particular time. For example, if we were to sample the world at 1800, Europe is in midst of modernity but Japan is still a feudal society. I'm reluctant to rely too much on time because social character can vary to such an extent—what I mean by that is individual cultures and societies have their own speed of development and way of developing; they have their own character. So as I listened to your account, I personally found myself not particularly wanting to slice across all cultures.

Yusupova It would be interesting to organize an international exhibition on contemporary art. How are Japanese artists being influenced by contemporary artists? What I mean by that is, Japanese art is influenced by different art from around the world. I think it would be a fascinating project to present how world art is accepting Japanese art, how traditional creativity is being used to produce new work.

Asami The TNM's collection includes *Kirishitan* (Christian) material. These were objects seized from Christians by the Nagasaki authorities, and they include an ivory object made in Europe and brought to Japan during the period when Christianity was being accepted, and a Christ figure rendered in thick seashell—if it were thin, we would use it for *raden* inlay. These may have a connection to Southeast Asia or Goa, India. According to Dr. Morse's presentation, Mexico was a part of these missionaries' regular route. Because the TNM collection is holding these works from regions unknown, there's a need to look into them with researchers from other countries. We can conduct a research project in partnership with scholars, mainly from Portugal, Spain, Italy, South Asia, Goa, and make the results count by making it a part of the permanent exhibit. An exhibition couldn't be based solely on *Kirishitan* objects, nor on Japanese artifacts alone, but it might be possible to put them together with Christian art from the same period around the world. It might be a difficult undertaking, though... Right now, there are no experts in the field at the TNM, so we would need help in conducting the research. We hope to count on your help.

We're now taking questions from the audience, so please raise your hand if you have any questions for the panel.

Audience Member 1 I practice *tenkoku* (seal carving), which is a part of *shodō* (calligraphy). During conversations with *nihonga* (traditional Japanese painting) practitioners, I hear a lot of opinions along the lines of, "I don't give much thought to where I place my seal," "I don't know where to put it," or "It's just in the way." So I argued back that if

you look at the work of legendary artists like Yokoyama Taikan and Konoshima Ōkoku, the seal is always placed to form a part of the composition and you can see what thought went into it. I was told, “Times have changed, that kind of thing is old-fashioned,” and I didn’t know what to say. When all sorts of expression, Eastern and Western, flood in, anything goes. When a new form of expression is created, things that used to be considered fine, like the placement of the seal and other traditions, come to be treated dismissively as legacy, and I feel a terrible sense of urgency—or rather, I feel it’s not a good trend. I think a philosophy that calls for artistry in even a signature should be kept. I would like to see it kept too, as a tenkoku practitioner, but I would like to hear what you think of this trend, and how we should proceed.

For example, there have long been strict rules about where to place the seal for certain kinds of composition. There were artist’s seal rules since before. Today, they’re not taken very seriously. Why not put it wherever, that’s the attitude. I feel that this is due to the rise of many new schools of thought in the East and the West. I think that if new expressions are available, there will be people who question the things that were done up to that point, who question why we do things that way. Dismissing the way things used to be done, making them just a footnote like, “That’s how it was back then”—for that to happen, I think, is very dangerous. I want to ask you if we should be resigned to this as a course of history, or how to go about with a revival, or get people to reassess.

Asami Since Executive Director Shimatani of Kyūshū National Museum is with us, I’d like to ask him to take this question.

Shimatani I probably shouldn’t be the one answering, but I’m going to say that seal placement cannot help but change with the times. Japanese art has existed since antiquity, predating the influence of any foreign culture. And it underwent changes when new cultures came over from China and the Korean Peninsula. It wasn’t possible for Japanese art to remain as it had been, and so it took in each change of circumstance, and we see art today, left to us from each of those points in time. So I don’t think it’s about ignoring old things, or mocking them, or seeing them as lesser, but about using them in tandem.

People might have beliefs about where a seal should be placed for a particular picture. There might be a spot that is *the* right spot for that work. So the point is to find that spot, find where to place the seal. I think there are also instances where you only use a seal and instances where you also sign your name. That can make the difference between success and failure in a work. It’s not much of an example, but when my daughter was in first grade at elementary school, she wrote the character for “moon.” She did a great job, so naturally, we had her sign her name. And that just ruined the piece. For some works, it turns out that just stamping a seal would have been much better. I think that’s an assessment that might be made by history, by that era if you will, using that person’s aesthetics and the aesthetics of the time.

I don’t know when Japanese people first saw an Impressionist work, but I’m sure there were those who immediately liked it and those whose first reaction was “What?” I’m sure the same was true of the audience who first saw Impressionist works in Paris, France. Earlier, Mr. Imai mentioned that Orientalism existed in both China and Japan, but I think the correct tense is “exists right now,” rather than “existed.” The title of this symposium alludes to how we’ll understand one another. We might already have a long history, but by continuing to engage in international exchange, I think our understanding of each other will deepen with the passage of 100 years, 200 years. Circling back to artists’ seals, the answer might be not to focus on protecting old things but to incorpo-

rate current-day thinking, and use the old in tandem with the contemporary. I'm not sure if that helps, but...

I have a question for Dr. Yano, if that's all right. With your museum labels, you have a convention of inverting the white and the black for the artists'. Do you not do that for deceased contemporary artists, or is it only for living artists? What about people who passed away just a few years ago?

Yano Even if the artist passed away just a few years ago, their name cards aren't black. The premise is that black cards are only for someone who is still living. There were discussions about the demarcation, however, on the subject of how far the category of "contemporary" or "living" extends to. We did want to make the line very clear, so living people have a black museum label with white lettering.

Asami Any other questions?

Audience Member 2 It's been over 30 years since Said's book was published. There are Japanese translations of debates regarding Orientalism. So when I see Japanese art scholars who are unaware of these things yet are still having a discussion, I found it all a bit frightening. I don't know if it's the Galápagos Syndrome, but I'm shocked by the very fact that there's a discussion of this sort happening at this late juncture. Dr. Nishimura Morse mentioned that there have already been critiques of Said's work. There were also other concepts mentioned such as negotiation and transculturalism that arose in the wake of Said. I assumed that this discussion would dig into these ideas, but I feel that the talk has moved along without turning in that direction.

My question is in that vein. The key point in the concept of negotiation is the existence of negotiators. The negotiators all embody their respective interests. In this case, they would be the museums, the audiences, and the researchers. I think the process of these negotiators having two-way, three-way discussions and finding certain points of connection is the act of exhibiting, of organizing exhibitions. In that context, it was alienating to listen to a line of discussion that talked about the defining characteristics of Japanese art as though Japanese art is a single, unified thing.

I feel that Mr. Imai made a telling comment at the end of his presentation. You very briefly said something to the effect of Japanese potters or rather Japanese people finding artistic originality, their own ways, as a survival strategy in the context of Japan's relationship with China. I would have liked to hear more about that. What did you mean specifically? You also stated around the same time how important it is that there's no class hierarchy in Japan. If that were true, then there would have been no barrier to *ukiyo-e* being recognized as high art during the Edo period. But instead, what happened was that *ukiyo-e* took the path of being discovered by people of the West, then coming back to Japan. So it follows that the extreme blurring of lines among social classes or between amateurs and professionals may have something to do with a certain class mobility underpinning Japanese society—not unlike *gekokujō* ("the low overcoming the high") of the Momoyama period. I'd like to hear your thoughts on this.

Imai Let me start with your later points. I think your argument is quite valid since all my examples of Japanese originality—Chōjirō, Kōetsu, Kenzan—are from the post-Momoyama period. However, the pieces from the Six Ancient Kilns of the Middle Ages and Nara-sansai even further back aren't Chinese art per se either. I wish I could have gone into that in detail as well, but there wasn't the time, for one thing. I do need to point out though, that *yakishime* (unglazed high-fired) ceramics from the Middle Ages

weren't taken seriously until postwar, or rather, until the period of rapid economic development. That's a separate issue.

As for the Japanese potters working to maintain originality, the Chinese created easy-to-understand polarities and a high-achieving culture. There's a well-known Chinese motif of five bats together. These represent the five blessings described in the *Classic of History*: to be long-lived, to have wealth, to be healthy and suffer no sickness or accidents, and shoehorned it almost as a justification, love of virtue, with natural death as the last blessing. That one basically means not suffering an untimely or unusual death. At a glance, being healthy and rich and long-lived seems to have a universal quality, but there can be other value systems. For example, aren't there people whose lives were brief but meaningful? Or people who were materially poor but had rich inner lives? I would suggest that perhaps the Japanese cherished the sense of value that could be teased out of these gaps.

Iro-nabeshima is of course quite a corner case in ceramics history in terms of technical level. This type of thing was immediately over once the sumptuary laws were passed by the Tokugawa shogunate. What I am trying to say here is that Japan was not suited to pursuing perfection in certain paths. Though I'm not sure if this answers your question.

Audience Member 3 This question is for Mr. Imai. In thinking about Japanese art, how should we understand the role of Joseon culture? I got the impression that in this symposium, you were mainly talking about Joseon as a way station through which culture from China came to Japan. For example, you stated that Kōrai tea bowls were not admired in Korea but acclaimed in Japan. While such a conclusion might be drawn about the political class of Joseon, I don't think that's necessarily supportable among ordinary people, considering that these kinds of bowls were made in large numbers and the fact that quite a few potters who made these kinds of ware were brought to Japan following Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasions of Korea. If we pull back further to the times of Kudara (Baekje) and Shiragi (Silla), *toraijin* (immigrants from the Korean Peninsula) seem to have had an immeasurably large impact on Japanese culture. I think Joseon culture had a larger presence beyond simply being a conduit for Chinese culture. What are your thoughts?

Imai If the impression I gave was that the Korean Peninsula was nothing more than a cultural conduit from the Continent to Japan, I failed to articulate my own thoughts. That is not at all how I see things. Even within Japanese tradition, Karamono (Chinese ware) and Kōrai-mono (Korean ware) are clearly distinct, and each category is recognized for its unique value. I myself believe that the large, high-footed ōido-style tea bowl was no miscellany but a ritual implement used in that country during Joseon Dynasty to make offerings to ancestors. There is a perspective in Korea as well that sees the royal kiln of Gwangju as the central focus, and Kōrai ware is left out in the cold there. But in Japan, as something completely different from Karamono tea bowls, Kōrai ware was recognized by tea practitioners before *wamono* (Japanese ware) was. I believe that it was of course recognized within Japanese culture.

Audience Member 4 Just the other day, there was a shocking incident where a fire destroyed a number of cultural properties at a Brazilian museum. I'm interested to see if anybody on the panel has any thoughts or comments on this.

Imai A museum is a major gathering place for old cultural properties, so it's a grave problem for any disaster to strike at a place like that. It goes without saying that fires should not happen at museums. Dr. Yano spoke about the issue of whether museums

own or manage cultural properties. I feel it's important to also introduce the idea that we are stewards on behalf of future generations. By including that frame, we won't fall into unproductive, polarized discussions that pit preservation against utilization.

Asami I think we have time for one more question.

Audience Member 5 Thank you for very enjoyable presentations today. I think it would be even better if the discussions around global and cross-culture perspectives, or such multiple steps, were taken to the next level. I'd like to tell you a little about what I think, rather than ask a question.

You spoke about what it means to contrast old and new things, exhibiting them side-by-side. I was also a curator for many years, at a university museum. So I worked with students, people who hadn't yet opened their eyes to many things, weren't managing to notice many things. During those years, what I tried to do was to enable the students—without forcing the issue too much—to get to a place of noticing old things and things from a time close to the now, or noticing the fact that there was a connection there. For students, contemporary art is less about tradition and more a global phenomenon. For example, manga is a word written with the alphabet that students in other countries also understand. Japanese students understand on one level that manga is not Japan-only but a global medium.

So when contemporary art is compared to Hokusai's sketches or illustrated scrolls or what have you, I wonder if that enables the audience to see uniquely Japanese things from a global, international perspective. There are new things, contemporary and traditional things, and by being able to consider them in connection with each other, I think you can quickly and fully understand concepts like globalism and cross-culturalism without overthinking it, in a sense, by splitting the process into multiple steps. It would be great if you could make one more push in, for example, the TNM's history exhibits to bridge the gap with the present. My sense of it is, the young Japanese and others would absorb both a more international way of thinking as well as parts that accumulate to eventually form history, without overthinking it.

Asami Does anyone have a response to this input? All right, our time is almost up. If anyone has one last thing they would like to say, please go ahead.

Morse First, thank you for this wonderful opportunity. As you just said, there is much to discuss. We shared this time together as presenters and panelists, and I think the presentations made it clear that there is no monolithic perspective on Japan. Different ways of seeing reflect where we each come from; abroad and even in Japan there are many perspectives on Japanese art. I think what is important is that there are these multiple perspectives.

Imai This is a personal story, but in the neighborhood of Senju, Tokyo where I live, there used to be a fossil fuel power plant. The four smokestacks were in a diamond pattern and depending on where you were, it looked like there were two stacks, or three, or four, so they were called the "haunted stacks." Listening to everyone today, I found myself thinking. I think that you can only ever grasp the true nature of a thing if you're aware that where you stand—your perspective—is relative.

Asami It's now time to conclude this panel discussion. Any lack of depth in the discussion is entirely due to my shortcomings as a moderator and I apologize for this. Thank you, all.

Chairperson The discussion in today's symposium ranged in many directions. This shows that reforms that museums must undertake touch on numerous areas. Right now, the TNM is faced with a major revamp in preparation for the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games as well as the 150th anniversary of the museum itself. We are particularly in need of ways to better serve our many overseas visitors from countries all over the world. Lately, the problem of museum labels and guidance has emerged as an especially intense issue. The museum label was also a major topic at this symposium. There were many lessons for us, such as the British Museum's very detailed, careful label-making process. To use a real-life example, the TNM changes its exhibits frequently. It might be difficult for you to guess how often. I discovered this when I was with the education department at the museum, but including every exhibition room, we conduct around 300 exhibit changes annually. And we create all the labels as called for during those 300 changes, but the reality is that we struggle to find the time. That kind of thing will also need to be addressed while consulting the takeaways from this panel's views.

We also heard today about displaying an exhibit in the context of that object. Specifically, we talked about Buddhist statues. Our museum keeps religiosity to a minimum in our displays. But I realized that it isn't as simple as saying, "This is fine since the exhibit should be viewed as an artwork." There is room for a re-evaluation of how we display many kinds of work.

When we go to symposiums, we tend to feel a sense of completion as the event comes to an end. But this must be the beginning. I said earlier that we were facing a revamp, but this is also a major opportunity. At this symposium, there was also talk of a project partnership. By continuing these exchanges, museums can create a new story. As the no-holds-barred feedback reminded us, we must be more self-aware about the work that museums do. The term "Galápagos Syndrome" came up, and for the TNM to resist Galápagosizing, we must urgently adopt greater self-awareness about what we are exhibiting. For us, this symposium was very worthwhile for that reason alone—for having been able to feel that urgency.

This concludes the program for this symposium. Members of the audience, a round of applause for today's presenters, please. Thank you.