

DESIGNING A NEW MOLD: THE AMERICAN SILVER INDUSTRY AND JAPANESE  
MEIJI METALWORK 1876-1893

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Art History and the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy.

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## **Abstract**

The flood of Japanese decorative arts that reached American shores after Commodore Matthew C. Perry of the U.S. Navy compelled the opening of Japan to the West in 1854, initiated a mutually beneficial circuit of exchange that concomitantly enabled both countries to achieve international acclaim for their artistic merit in the field of metalwork. This dissertation explores the momentous technical, stylistic and creative impact that Japanese metalwork had upon the American silver industry in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the equally transformative impact that entry into the American market had upon Japanese metalwork, as the country emerged from international isolation during the Meiji era (1868-1912). The introduction of Japanese design amidst myriad Western revival movements allowed for the emergence of a complete break from the historicized European motifs, forms and iconography to which American silver had been subserviently tied. Leading silver firms, such as the Gorham Manufacturing Company and Tiffany & Co., adopted and adapted Japanese aesthetics and techniques to create visually stunning works, which garnered worldwide recognition and praise not previously achieved. Drawing on the dual traditions of Buddhist bronze casting and Samurai sword making, late nineteenth-century Japanese metalsmiths created works for display at American world's fairs that served to revitalize the Japanese metalworking industry, promote commercial export of Japanese metalwork and internationally showcase the metalworkers' technical and artistic virtuosity, and thus that of the nation's artistic culture as a whole. The beauty of Japanese mixed metalwork encouraged imitative reproductions in America, yet, more significantly, the ingenuity of traditional Japanese metalwork inspired the silversmiths of Tiffany and Gorham to develop a distinctly American realization of Japan's technically challenging processes, producing aesthetically striking results of international hybridity. Equally impossible

to conceive would be the international position and critical assessment of Japanese artists and designers in the early twentieth century, without the unequivocal impact of the country's aesthetics on the Western world, especially America. The predominant role of the Japanese metalworker entering a national phase of flux and the international rise of the American silversmith burgeoning beyond its borders converged to produce not only an explosion of innovative design, technology, and industry for both countries, but also an exponential expansion of an admiring international audience, boldly willing to cast aside past traditions, constraints, and biases. A new design was cast, indefinitely and concomitantly altering and transforming the American silver industry and Japanese Meiji metalworkers.

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## Introduction

Propelled by economic voracity and a desire for political dominance and global power, the United States through the presence of Commodore Perry of the U.S. Navy and accompanying battle ships at Edo (Tokyo) Bay negotiated the Treaty of Kanagawa with the Japanese Tokugawa shogunate in 1854. The accord, which stipulated conditions related to diplomacy, trade, and naval concessions was looked upon by the American government as a strategic coup with little consideration for what the intersection of cultures might generate. Rather than risk war with a foreign power equipped with modern weaponry, Japan reluctantly relinquished its more than two-hundred-year old isolation policy. Unwittingly, both countries subsequently experienced a transformation not originally envisioned by either government: Japanese aesthetics would forever alter the course of American art and design and Western consumerism would swiftly advance the status of Japanese art and design on the global market. Whereas nearly all types of artistic media were affected by this cultural juxtaposition—from paintings and prints to ceramics and lacquerware—the medium of metalwork stands as a primary visual testament to the momentous dynamism engendered when American and Japanese aesthetics collided and coalesced to form a new transhemispheric design legacy.

The flood of Japanese decorative arts that reached American shores after Perry compelled the opening of Japan initiated a mutually beneficial circuit of exchange that concomitantly enabled both countries to achieve international acclaim for their artistic merit in the field of metalwork. Whereas other media, such as ceramics, were impacted by this stylistic interchange, it is the medium of metalwork that experienced the greatest transformation. For Japanese smiths, the production of their wares fundamentally shifted from militaristic and religious needs to

domestic and decorative purposes. For American smiths, the production of their wares underwent an unprecedented break from traditional Western aesthetics, made possible in large part by Japanese metallurgical technology. The momentous technical, stylistic and creative impact that Japanese metalwork had upon the American silver industry in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was equaled by the transformative impact that entry into the American market had upon Japanese metalwork, as Japan emerged from international isolation during the Meiji era (1868-1912). The introduction of Japanese design amidst myriad Western revival movements allowed for the emergence of a complete break from the historicized European motifs, forms, and iconography to which American silver had been subserviently tied. Leading silver firms, such as the Gorham Manufacturing Company and Tiffany & Company, adopted and adapted Japanese aesthetics and techniques to create visually stunning works of silver mixed with other metals, which garnered worldwide recognition and praise not previously achieved. Drawing on the dual traditions of Buddhist bronze casting and Samurai sword making, late nineteenth-century Japanese metalsmiths created works for display at American world's fairs that served to revitalize the Japanese metalworking industry, promote commercial export of Japanese metalwork and internationally showcase the metalworkers' technical and artistic virtuosity and thus that of the nation's artistic culture as a whole.

This study directly identifies and links the ongoing circuits of exchange between Japan and America during the last quarter of the nineteenth century that profoundly affected the countries' silver and metalwork aesthetics, techniques and critical reviews. Whereas American Aesthetic silver may be addressed within the Aesthetic Movement and American silver industry as a whole, as well as in the context of a stylistic movement within a specific manufactory's milieu, further examination considers the causal means of interaction between Japanese and

American metalworking firms and the aesthetic, political, and cultural effects thereof. Likewise, beyond the discussion of Meiji-period metalwork and its contribution to leveraging Japan's status as an industrialized nation, a closer look advances the understanding of the manner in which Japanese and American silver firms ultimately facilitated the transformation of each other's status in the world market.

The methodology of this study is based on original research of company archives and design collections, as well as cross-disciplinary primary sources, including numerous volumes of nineteenth-century theories on decorative arts and design, thus expanding upon previous scholarship, while situating the cross-cultural impact between American and Japanese metalwork more prominently within the context of contemporary aesthetic, cultural, technological, economic and political issues, as well as American collecting practices. Research particular to the Gorham Manufacturing Company and Tiffany & Co. was conducted through company archives, and Gorham's design library held by the Rhode Island School of Design Fleet Library was examined for primary design sources and patterns of interpretation and adaptation. Study of objects and curatorial files of the Gorham collection at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, as well as the Edward C. Moore Collection and related texts owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, yielded original research in the areas of connoisseurship, iconography and formal analysis, allowing for the examination of the method in which Japanese objects in the design libraries were utilized by the two silver firms and the manner in which design elements held different meanings for American and Japanese audiences.

The first chapter situates the state and history of the American silver trade, specifically the Gorham Manufacturing Company and Tiffany & Company, and Japanese metalworking in the 1870s and progresses to discuss the conduits by which the Japanese aesthetic entered into the



genre of American silver, including the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, at which Japanese art made its American exposition debut; the establishment of Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha, a semi-private export company established by the Meiji government in Japan with offices in Europe and America; and the critical role of British designer Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), who collaborated extensively with Tiffany & Co. and the Japanese government to foster numerous important instances of artistic exchange and international dispersal. The display of Japanese wares at the Centennial Exhibition fueled the mania in the United States for Japanese design, which played a significant part in the development of the American Aesthetic Movement, spanning the 1870s to mid-1890s.

The nineteenth century would bring great and unwelcome changes to Japanese metalsmiths in the form of the 1876 Haitōrei Edict, disallowing private citizens—including the samurai—to wear a *katana*, the sword that served as the samurai's symbolic identity and as a mainstay of the Japanese metalwork industry. Buddhism also declined in favor during the Meiji era; thus commissions for large-scale, cast bronze temple objects dwindled. With the shogunate's loss of power due to the Emperor's restoration, the metalsmiths had lost their readymade clientele and were challenged to succeed on the open commercial market. America was still considered an ingénue on the world stage and desired to be recognized as a culturally established entity in the eyes of the world, especially those of Europe. While Japan, of course, was not a new country, its former self-imposed isolation and subsequent lack of technological progress situated the country as a newcomer regarding export and expositions. Before the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, the average American knew little of Japan or its art, thus providing the Meiji government a clean slate upon which to make an impression. America seized on the

opportunity to impress firmly upon Europe that it had politically and artistically come of age. Japan proved a good, if unintentional, ally for the purpose.

The second chapter examines Gorham's and Tiffany's absorption of the Japanese aesthetic through direct interpretations and hybridized stylizations that were often inspired by objects and volumes collected for the companies' design libraries. Although Tiffany could be defined mainly as a retail-based business and Gorham was built from the ground up as a manufacturing venture, the two firms participated in a highly aggressive competition to dominate the American silver market. Both were driven to produce the most innovative and creative wares in order to feed the country's voracious appetite for prestigious social standing through the prominent display and use of exceptional, fashionable and impressive possessions. This spirited corporate rivalry extended beyond domestic borders, manifesting itself in elaborate displays at world's fairs where only the most magnificent and accomplished works were guaranteed international attention and critical acclaim.

Edward C. Moore, Tiffany's chief designer from 1868 until 1891, hired Dresser to collect *objets d'art* for the company's design library during his 1876 tour of Japan. Dresser assembled a group of over two thousand Japanese items in diverse media, forming both Tiffany's and Moore's personal collection of Japanese objects, the latter of which was given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Although often overshadowed by Tiffany, the Gorham Manufacturing Co. was arguably the first silver firm to incorporate Japanese aesthetics, motifs and techniques into its designs. Gorham's designers also had the benefit of an extensive design library stocked with Japanese volumes and objects. Central to comprehending the manner in which Gorham and Tiffany designers and silversmiths utilized Japanese design books and Western books on Japanese design is the identification of which specific volumes were owned

and the understanding that these volumes were not valued as art books—although some of them were very costly—but rather actively and frequently handled as they lay at the ready on the smiths’ workbenches. Designs, such as those of Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), were directly copied in form and composition, individually copied to create new configurations, or served as inspiration for novel arrangements and presentations. Hokusai’s *Manga*, a fifteen-volume series published between 1814 and 1878 of which Gorham owned seven volumes—previously thought to be only six volumes—serves as an excellent example of a popular design source, providing templates for the detailed reproduction of a samurai warrior brandishing swords or a figural scene of two itinerant monks protecting sheets of religious text from a volatile wind, and stylized depictions of flora, birds, animals, and aquatic life.

The second chapter also pursues a study of the manner in which American silver firms incorporated Japanese metalworking technology, an aspect of Aesthetic silver that is frequently overlooked in favor of form and decoration. The extensive chromatic range of alloys and metalworking processes unique to Japanese metallurgy were integral to the development of Tiffany’s and Gorham’s creative achievements and success with Japanesque designs. Significantly, American understanding of these metallurgy processes did not derive from Japanese instruction of any kind; rather, American companies conducted trials until the desired results were achieved, innovatively adapting the techniques.

Two case studies focusing on works of Japanesque silver in the Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, the largest repository of Gorham silver in the world, comprise the third chapter. An amassment of seven-hundred and forty pieces of silver hollowware and flatware, the Furber Service is believed to be the company’s largest commission. The service, which was produced from 1870-1880, affords an unparalleled insight into the stylistic trajectory of

American taste in the late nineteenth century, as well as the specific design shifts occurring within Gorham's milieu over the course of a pivotal decade of aesthetic advance. The commission was placed by Henry Jewitt Furber, who was enamored with the classicism of the Italian Renaissance as evidenced by the Renaissance Revival style which dominated the service's appearance for the first eight years of its production. Yet in 1878, an ensemble of a water pitcher, pair of cups, and tray decorated with Japanesque fish, turtles, butterflies, and dragonflies was added to the service. Echoing the nearly immediate American embrace of Japanese aesthetics following the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, the break from historicized styles of the past represented by the Furber Japanesque wares was a complete departure from the service's initial stylistic tone, signaling not only the impact that Japanese design had upon a major commission, but also the readiness with which Gorham responded to their customers' clamor for the prevailing stylistic fashion.

A six-piece tea service in Gorham's *Oriental East Indian* pattern of 1886, elaborately and profusely decorated with blended elements of Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Islamic, and Greco-Roman derivation, is a testament to the ability of Japanesque design to continue to shape American silver design in the late nineteenth century. Receiving critical acclaim and market share for its Japanesque creations, Gorham felt a sense of confidence and success in its bold combinations and innovative interpretations of Japanese design, and by the 1880s designers had begun to combine a multitude of various types of cultural ornamentation within a single piece. By this time, the embrace of what was considered the East had expanded to encompass aesthetics originating from a much larger geographical and cultural range. Known as American Orientalism, the movement was part of a Western construct of the "Orient," a nebulous geographical location including Moorish, Indian, Islamic, Near Eastern, Far Eastern, and Persian

lands. Japanesque design began as the impetus for the eschewal of a dogged retention of traditional historicized styles within the context of American silver design; it became the recognized core on which to base further adoption and adaption of a plethora of “Eastern” design, thus continuing to suppress the ennui of the past and facilitating America’s continuing fascination with and desire for the exotic.

The final chapter analyzes the aesthetic repercussions of the 1880s, as the mediated appearances of both American and Japanese silver and metalwork prompted strong critical response. American silver was met with great international admiration, while American and European critics expressed dismay and concern regarding the detrimental effects Westernization had brought to the “purity” of Japanese design, which also suffered from the Meiji government’s prioritization of industry over aesthetics. Bowing to economic considerations, the very character and spirit of Japanese metalwork so esteemed by American silver firms was suffering the adverse effects of transculturation, draining designs of their exceptional nature and novel disposition. The conclusion culminates with the 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, the last world’s fair at which American silver firms promoted Aesthetic silver. Buoyed by a national initiative to protect Japan’s artistic heritage from detrimental foreign effects, Meiji leaders had reevaluated and shifted their philosophy of artistic production for their Chicago displays.

Out of the seemingly irreparable implosion of the Japanese metalworking industry in the mid-nineteenth century came not only a revival of past techniques, styles and craftsmanship, but also a renewed quest for invention. Simultaneously faulted and favored by foreign audiences, the melding of Japanese tradition with Western inspirations in metalworks forged for show at international expositions demonstrated that the Japanese Meiji government could leverage innovative industry founded on the legacy of native crafts as a way to contribute to Japan’s

modernization. Although the beauty of Japanese metalwork encouraged derivative reproductions in America, more significantly, the ingenuity of traditional Japanese metalwork inspired the silversmiths of Gorham and Tiffany to develop a distinctly American realization of Japan's technically challenging processes and distinctive aesthetics that produced visually striking examples of international hybridity.

## **Chapter I: Japan Comes to America: The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha and Christopher Dresser**

By invitation of the American minister in Japan, John Armor Bingham, Japan's American exposition debut was the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, to which the Japanese government sent seven thousand packages of artwork from all regions of the country.<sup>1</sup> During a six-month period, the fair's thirty international participants drew ten million attendees who experienced the first world's fair to feature a village of fifteen foreign exhibition pavilions. Of these, two were built by Japan using traditional native architecture: the Japanese Bazaar and the Japanese Dwelling, or the Commissioner's Residence. Comprising a house with outdoor seating and a garden, the Bazaar afforded attendees the opportunity to purchase souvenirs and drink tea, while the Commissioner's Residence housed a panoply of ceramics, furniture, screens, lacquerware, bamboo wares and metalwork.<sup>2</sup> As with the 1873 Vienna International Exposition, the metalwork generated extensive praise. Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853-1908), future professor of philosophy and political economy at the Tokyo Imperial University, wrote: "The Japanese exhibit is a mine of wonders. Bronzes are of the most exquisite

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<sup>1</sup> Felice Fischer, "The Centennial Exhibition, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Hector Tyndale," *Antiques* 161 (2002): 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

workmanship.”<sup>3</sup> It took J. S. Ingram only two paragraphs in his twelve-page report of the Japanese exhibits in his 1876 *The Centennial Exposition* before he began his laudatory descriptions of the “rich vases of bronze, gold and silver, embossed and inlaid, of values rising into the thousands,” one of which was estimated “to have been equivalent to 2,250 days steady labor for one man.”<sup>4</sup> The price for this vase was \$2,000, approximately \$40,000 in today’s dollars, and, in Ingram’s opinion, “did not seem extravagant.”<sup>5</sup> Ingram’s judgment reflected America’s policy of equating the value of a product, such as the “enormous bronzes,” with the skill and labor with which it was created. This paralleled closely with the Japanese perspective regarding the purpose for participating in the expositions: whereas it was the artisans’ crafts that were being showcased, the ulterior motive was one of the value and profit of industry, which sometimes compromised aesthetic considerations.<sup>6</sup> Positive press was not to be Japan’s only reward; the country’s expenditure of \$600,000 (approximately \$12 million in today’s dollars) on the exposition was soon realized as a valuable investment, as evidenced by the 142 awards their exhibitions received.<sup>7</sup>

Marking just a century of existence, America was still striving to achieve recognition as a contender in the international arena.<sup>8</sup> While Japan, of course, was not a new country, its self-imposed isolation and subsequent lack of technological progress situated the country as a

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<sup>3</sup> Ernest Francisco Fenollosa, *Notes on Visit to Centennial, September-October, 1876*, ed. Akiko Murakata (Japan: s.n. 1986?). The papers of (Ernest Francisco Fenollosa are in the collections of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<sup>4</sup> J. S. Ingram, *The Centennial Exposition, Described and Illustrated, Being a Concise and Graphic Description of This Grand Enterprise*, 1876 (Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1976), 560.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. For image see Joe Earle, *Splendors of the Meiji: Treasures of Imperial Japan* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Broughton International Inc., 1999), 34, 40.

<sup>6</sup> Anna Jackson, “Imaging Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture,” *Journal of Design History* 5 (1992): 246.

<sup>7</sup> Fischer, 98.

<sup>8</sup> Neil, Harris, “All the World a Melting Pot? Japan at American Fairs, 1876-1904,” in *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, edited by Akira Iriye (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 27.

Jean-Marie Moulin, “The Second Empire: Art and Society,” in *The Second Empire, 1852-1870: Art in France under Napoleon III*. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art: distributed by Wayne State University Press, 1978), 12.

newcomer at the expositions. Before the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, the average American knew little of Japan or its art, thus providing the Meiji government a fairly clean slate upon which to make an impression.<sup>9</sup> America, on the other hand, had its first opportunity to firmly impress upon Europe that it had come of age and was capable of establishing beneficial international relations. Japan proved a good, if unintentional, ally for the purpose. Clearly challenging the European canon, James McCabe, author of *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition* of 1876, decried the European wares to be “barbarous lumps of gold,” whereas he declared that the Japanese objects possessed “a grace and elegance of design and fabulous perfection of workmanship which rival[s] or excel[s] the marvels of Italian or ornamental art at its zenith....After the Japanese collection everything looks in a measure commonplace, almost vulgar.”<sup>10</sup> The 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition had been a catalyst in fueling the mania in the United States for Japanese design, known as *Japonisme*, which played a significant part in the development of the American Aesthetic Movement spanning the 1870s to 1880s. Endeavoring to reform the contemporary taste for multiple historicized revival styles, the Aesthetic Movement sought new sources of inspiration, and the combined simplicity and exoticism of uncorrupted Japanese design came to be considered particularly avant-garde and innovative, as reflected in the “Japanese Parlor” of the William H. Vanderbilt house in New York, completed in 1882 by the leading Aesthetic Movement designers, Gustave (1830–1898) and Christian Herter (1839–1883).

Gottfried Wagener (1831-1892), a German scientist hired by the Japanese government to advise them on their exhibitions in Vienna, realized that the country did not yet have much to show in the way of modern technology and suggested that the country’s technological abilities be

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<sup>9</sup> Harris, 25.

<sup>10</sup> James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition* (Philadelphia, 1876); cited in Harris, 30.



demonstrated through the technical skills of artists embodied in their native crafts.<sup>11</sup> Ironically, age-old crafts became the means with which Japan initially forged a new identity in the international market. While the country worked towards modernization, the government's decision to leverage their traditional arts at the venues of world's fairs was the agent by which the country gained international importance, expanded trade and learned Western technology, which was integrated into their industrialization initiatives.<sup>12</sup> Emboldened by the success their wares achieved in Vienna, the Japanese government turned down an offer from the Alexandra Park Company to establish an export company in London for the country's goods; instead they established their own in 1873.<sup>13</sup>

Championing a policy known as *shokusan kōgyō* (encouraging manufacture and promoting industry), the Meiji government supported the founding of Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha (First Trading and Manufacturing Company), a semi-private company charged with the production of Japanese wares for export and exhibition at international and government-sponsored National Industrial Expositions, five of which were held during the Meiji era (1868-1912).<sup>14</sup> The fact that the company was founded for the express purpose of producing export and exposition goods was emphasized by its constitution, which mandated that all personnel, financial and production issues were overseen by the Exhibition Bureau.<sup>15</sup> The nearly four-and-a-half-foot tall bronze figural sculpture entitled *The Dragon King of the Sea* by Ōshima Joun, displayed at the second National Industrial Exposition held in Tokyo in 1881, was entered under

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>12</sup> Oliver Impey, et al., *Meiji no takara = Treasures of Imperial Japan: The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Japanese Art, Vol. I*, (London: Kibo Foundation, 1995), 58.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>14</sup> There were five National Industrial Expositions held during the Meiji period: 1877 in Kyoto, 1881 in Tokyo, 1890 in Tokyo, 1895 in Kyoto and 1903 in Osaka.

<sup>15</sup> Impey, 78.

the name of the Sanseisha company, a private competitor of the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha.<sup>16</sup> The practice of listing exposition entries under the companies with whom the artists contracted, rather than the artists' names, underscored the reality that exposition participation was foremost a nationalistic enterprise, undertaken for the promotion of industry and international recognition of the country.<sup>17</sup>

The bureau selected Matsuo Gisuke, a tea merchant, and Wakai Kensaburō, an art dealer—both of whom had accompanied the Japanese government envoy to Vienna—to manage the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha. A Tokyo office was opened in 1874 with a total staff of around fourteen employees. In conjunction with the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia, the company opened offices in New York at 865 Broadway, and then in Paris on the Boulevard des Capucines in 1878, on the occasion of the *Exposition Universelle*. Their production sites consisted of a workshop for ceramics and metalwork built behind the Tsukiji Honganji Temple in the Tsukiji district of Tokyo, a second ceramics workshop in Asakusa, a district in Taitō, Tokyo, and a third workshop for lacquer, textiles, and cloisonné built near the company's offices.<sup>18</sup>

By 1878, the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha was commissioning work from fifty-two independent artists and craftsmen, as well as contracting with other artisans to purchase ready-made wares, such as lacquerware, ceramics, metalwork, needlework, bamboo work and papercraft.<sup>19</sup> In 1874, the Exhibition Board chose one of the foremost bronze-casters of the Meiji period, Suzuki Chōkichi (1848-1919), to head the metal casting division, which he did until 1890. Born in Ishii,

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<sup>16</sup> For image of *The Dragon King of the Sea*, see Oliver Impey and Malcolm Fairley, *The Dragon King of the Sea: Japanese Decorative Art of the Meiji Period from the John R. Young Collection* (Oxford: The University of Oxford and the Ashmolean Museum, 1991), 32-33.

<sup>17</sup> Oliver Impey, et al., *Meiji no takara = Treasures of Imperial Japan: Metalwork, Vol. I*. (London: Kibo Foundation, 1995), 38.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

a village in the Iruma district of Musashi Province, Chōkichi moved to Tokyo for a five-year apprenticeship with Okano Tōryūsai, who specialized in the lost-wax method of casting.<sup>20</sup> Before joining the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha, Chōkichi had established his own foundry in 1865 and adopted the name Kakō as his *gō*, or artist's name. In addition to the large-scale bronze sculptures for exhibition, Chōkichi collaborated with other artists in the design of mixed metal works, especially vases, for exhibition and export by the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha. Many of the designs of these vases depicted minutely detailed flora and fauna which were inspired by the style of the Edo-era (1603-1868) Rinpa school, the aesthetics of which were revived in the nineteenth century by Ogata Kōrin's follower, Sakai Hōitsu (1761-1828).<sup>21</sup> The design of a pair of 1880s bronze, baluster-form vases attributed to Chōkichi has been identified as that of Hōitsu's style. Intricately inlaid with silver and gold depictions of fledging birds nestled in bamboo stems, receiving nourishment in the form of spiders delivered by the parent birds, the vases' designs follow the decorative nature of the Rinpa school.<sup>22</sup> Chōkichi's contribution to Japan's showing of metalwork at international and national expositions was credited as one of the driving forces reinvigorating the metalworking industry, as well as situating the country as a world leader in both technical execution and aesthetic innovation in cast and mixed-metal works.

The praise afforded Japanese large-scale bronze sculptures at their international debuts was due to a number of competing and, at times, conflicting design inspirations. Often, European and American responses offered high praise yielding to Asian aesthetic superiority. However, it was not unusual for such commentaries to consolidate all "Oriental" cultures. American stylistic critique initially focused on the presence of novelty and the fantastic, as in J. S. Ingram's

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<sup>20</sup> Kumiko Doi, et al., *Japan Goes to the World's Fairs: Japanese Art in the Great Expositions in Europe and the United States 1867-1904* (Tokyo: NHK and NHK Promotions Co., Ltd., 2005), unpaginated biographical notes.

<sup>21</sup> Impey, 80.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* For image see Impey, 80.

comments at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial International Exposition: “There was no end to the variety of decorative work put upon the vases. The grotesque, for which the Japanese have such a remarkable fancy, predominated, and showed itself not only in the dragons and other uncouth creatures unknown to natural history, but in the funniest imaginable caricatures of official and domestic life.”<sup>23</sup>

Yet even though appreciation for Japan’s traditional design sense existed, there was confusion among artists during the initial years of the Meiji restoration, as they tried to fulfill the seemingly impossible mandate to preserve traditions while embracing innovations. This confusion led to the creation of bronze works that were often a curious hybrid of Asian and Western aesthetics during exhibitions of the 1860s and 1870s. Although initially met with high praise, the nearly seven-and-a-half foot tall incense burner surrounded by exotic peacocks by Chōkichi presented at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1878 was later harshly criticized for kowtowing to Western tastes.<sup>24</sup> However, it was created during the height of Victorian taste in Europe and America, when interiors featured a profusion of eclectic styles and ornamentation, such as rooms stuffed with a plethora of furnishings, and innumerable patterns and designs vying for attention. The crowded hall of the Frederic W. Stevens house on Fifth Avenue in New York exemplifies Victorian excess as it teems with an overabundance of Belgian tapestries, Near Eastern carpets, Italian and French furnishings and, in the center of it all, one of the pair of Japanese bronze vases that flanked the entrance to the Japanese exhibition at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition.

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<sup>23</sup> Ingram, 560.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Brinkley, *Japan: Its History Arts and Literature* (London, 1904); cited in Impey, et al., *Meiji*, Vol. I, 36. Brinkley praised Chōkichi’s later work but chastised his earlier works, specifically the peacock incense burner, which he refers to as a censer: “He has emerged from the days of false standards when he manufactured some pieces remembered by him to-day [sic] with shame—notably a huge censer now in the possession of the South Kensington Museum,” now the Victoria and Albert Museum.

In response to the long-accepted theory that these bronzes commissioned by the Meiji government for world's fairs were looked upon only as export wares for a receptive, if not unenlightened, international clientele, created with no regard for traditional Japanese aesthetics, Japanese art scholar Joe Earle has countered that "the response to Western taste did not lead to the direct import of Western styles and motifs; rather it encouraged the selection and sometimes the exaggeration of disparate Japanese elements."<sup>25</sup> Demonstrating Earle's point is the combination of Japanese mythology, samurai warrior scenes, traditional naturalist elements, and the techniques of both bronze casters and metal inlayers found in a cast-bronze incense burner inlaid with gold and silver ornamentation, which was similar to examples shown at Vienna and Philadelphia.<sup>26</sup> In the same vein and most likely made in the 1870s for an exposition, another incense burner (*kōro*) in the *usubata* form (vase with wide basin rim used for formal floral displays) made by Chōkichi depicts the famous Noh play story of the ninth-century poetess Ono no Komachi on one side and one of the views of *Ōmi hakkei*, or the Eight Views of Lake Biwa, on the other.<sup>27</sup> The incense burners illustrate Earle's theory that the figural narrative decoration and physical form of the large bronze exhibition vases originated from a combination of popular mythical tales from the Edo period, dramatic depictions of warriors from late Edo prints and book illustrations, and the flattened, wide rim of seventeenth-century bronze *usubata* flower vases.<sup>28</sup>

Whereas the gallimaufry of Japanese subject matter with Western excess may have initially pleased foreign audiences, by the late 1870s, Americans feared that Western impact on

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<sup>25</sup> Joe Earle, *Splendors of the Meiji: Treasures of Imperial Japan* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Broughton International Inc., 1999), 64.

<sup>26</sup> Joe Earle, "Japanese Bronzes of the Early Meiji Period (1868-1912): Meaning and Motivation," *Apollo* 154, no. 277 (November 2001), 36. Although there is no record of the incense burner's exhibition at an exposition, it is unlikely that a piece of this size and quality was not commissioned as an exhibition entry.

<sup>27</sup> For image of an *usubata* vase, see Joe Earle, *Flower Bronzes of Japan* (London: M. Goedhuis, 1995), 96.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

traditional Japanese characteristics and craftsmanship was causing the Japanese to embrace “the desirableness of shoddy and the importance of cheapness.”<sup>29</sup> In 1879, British designer Christopher Dresser regretted that “during the last ten years the art-works of Japan have deteriorated to a lamentable extent. Contact with Europeans unfortunately brings about the deterioration of Eastern art.”<sup>30</sup>

The Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha had adopted a process by which painters created most of the designs for all media, including metalwork by smiths as talented as Chōkichi, thus creating a “house style.”<sup>31</sup> Still extant are over two thousand *shitae*, or design drawings, commissioned by the company from artists during the seventeen years of the enterprise’s business. One such *shitae* executed by Yamamoto Kōichi was transformed into a richly patinated bronze vase forged by Chōkichi and carved by Sugiura Yukinari. Silver and bronze quails perch upon leafy branches laden with berries in vibrant autumnal tones of crimson, gold, and amber. Sugiura Yukinari and his brother, Sugiura Yukimune, created equally arresting vases for the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha, adorned with metallic renditions of silver and gold long-eared owls and brightly-hued fruits beneath a woven bamboo band.<sup>32</sup>

By the 1870s, the Western stylistic disposition had begun to veer away from the excess of Victorian interiors, but perception of this shift was delayed in Japan for a number of reasons. The Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha conducted market surveys at both international and national expositions in hopes of producing objects that paralleled current tastes; however, they did little to anticipate the future.<sup>33</sup> The Meiji monarch was credited with synthesizing a mix of native tastes

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<sup>29</sup> Harris, 34.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher Dresser, *Principles of Decorative Design*, 1873 (Reprint, New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1973), 161.

<sup>31</sup> Impey, 1995, *Metalwork*, Vol. I., 38.

<sup>32</sup> For image see Earle, 1999, 43.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

with the “Western repertoire of royal pomp,”<sup>34</sup> but the Imperial household was also labeled as conservative and wary of any revolutionizing changes.<sup>35</sup> As the government’s agenda was chiefly to promote and monitor the quality of Japan’s craftsmanship, aesthetic and stylistic issues were often secondary considerations. The Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha’s continued use of increasingly unfashionable in-house designs ultimately produced wares deemed so outmoded that the objects were unmarketable.<sup>36</sup> Saddled with a failing design aesthetic and the burden of producing the country’s often unsaleable, large-scale exhibition pieces, the company claimed bankruptcy in 1891 and disbanded. Imperial moderation and government obliviousness to transforming trends significantly contributed to the company’s downfall.<sup>37</sup>

Christopher Dresser, the first European designer to visit Japan after its opening in 1854, is a figure whose parallel and intersecting activities with Japan and the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha were paramount in establishing, shaping, and fostering the presence and understanding of Japanese art in Europe and America. Claiming that visiting Japan would fulfill the “greatest desire of my life,” Dresser’s four-month journey in 1876 stood as a defining moment amid the designer’s myriad endeavors to promote and incorporate an educated understanding of the Japanese aesthetic into Western society through his designs, philosophies, teachings, collections, and publications.<sup>38</sup> Dresser’s Asian travels actualized his beliefs that by eschewing the artificial hierarchical division between Western and East Asian art, and by encouraging the critical study of Japanese art, the nineteenth-century vogue for historicizing styles could be supplanted by a new modernism in Western design.

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<sup>34</sup> Jordan Sand, “Was Meiji Taste in Interiors ‘Orientalist’?” in *Visual Cultures of Japanese Imperialism*, edited by Gennifer S. Weisenfeld (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2000), 647.

<sup>35</sup> Impey, 1995, *Metalwork*, Vol. I., 38.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Christopher Dresser, cited in Henry Lyons, *Christopher Dresser: The People’s Designer 1834-1904* (England: The Antique Collectors’ Club Ltd., 2005), 32.

A student of botany as well as design, Dresser approached Japanese art with a classificatory process germane to scientists and linguists, and sought to transcend conventional Western notions of the “Orient,” which hindered serious appreciation and understanding of Japanese art. Taking a radical departure from staid Victorian traditions, Dresser’s *avant-garde* designs were stylistically decades beyond his contemporaries, formed with absolute liberation from the stagnant conventions of the past. The designer methodically abstracted the individual components of an entity—whether it derived from the natural or human-made world—thus expunging any symbolic meaning of the former whole by reducing the parts into pure ornament, which could be freely synthesized into original conceptions. With a particular insight into Japan’s historic and contemporary artistic culture and production, Dresser’s unconventional approach and cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary interests were integral in forming a foundation of an educated dissemination of the principles and character of Japanese art in Europe and America, and were extensively responsible for shaping Western consideration of the Japanese aesthetic in terms of collection, exhibition, design, and education practices.

A leading proponent of British Japonism, the particular impact of Japanese art within the Aesthetic Movement, Dresser began his education at the London Schools of Design studying the Japanese holdings of the Victoria & Albert Museum, a collection that would subsequently prosper under Dresser’s advisement. Throughout his professional career, Dresser collaborated with institutional and commercial enterprises to build their collections and inventories with the constant objective of acquiring exemplary Japanese creations whose merits were based upon Japanese artistic criteria rather than biased Western conceptions.

Coinciding with nineteenth-century British design reform measures, Dresser’s designs manifested his conviction that everyday objects should possess a high level of both artistic and



functional quality, an aspect he readily found attendant in Japanese design. He also espoused a harmonious integration of design and industry, by which models would be conceived with adaptability to modern manufacturing processes. Whereas Japanese artistic values informed Dresser's designs, his travels throughout the country also informed the Japanese artists of progressive European industrial techniques.

At the time Dresser entered the Schools of Design in 1847 at age thirteen, the British government was embarking on a period of profound design reform in efforts to effectively compete with foreign manufactured goods, especially those of France.<sup>39</sup> Underscoring Britain's emphasis on the importance of design in industry, the Schools of Design, established in 1837 as the first publicly funded British design school, was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Practical Art, which operated under the aegis of the Board of Trade.<sup>40</sup> Following the dismal performance of Britain's manufacturers at the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations held in the Crystal Palace, Sir Henry Cole, founder of Felix Summerly Art-Manufacturers—a retail venture offering household wares designed by well-known artists—and leading exponent and organizer of the 1851 Great Exhibition, was hired to serve as the Director of the Schools of Design. Cole professed the reinstitution of “the good old practice of connecting Art with familiar objects in daily use.”<sup>41</sup>

The Schools of Design was reorganized and renamed the School of Art in 1853, and its overseeing body renamed the Department of Science and Art, which officially published its curriculum as the National Course of Art Instruction, its full title being “Course for Designers,

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<sup>39</sup> Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson, *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria & Albert Museum* (London: The Victoria & Albert Museum, 1997), 107.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

<sup>41</sup> Henry Cole, *Art-Manufacturers collected by Felix Summerly, shewing [sic] the Union of Fine-Art with Manufacture* (London: 1847); cited in Widar Halén, *Christopher Dresser* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1990), 20. Felix Summerly was the pseudonym of Sir Henry Cole. Felix Summerly Art-Manufacturers operated from 1847-50.

Ornamentists, and Those Intending to Be Industrial Artists.”<sup>42</sup> It was under this atmosphere of confusing and sometimes conflicting initiatives to define the ideas of art and design, as well as meld creative artistic practices with the mechanized techniques of industry and the fundamental need for viable international trade, that Dresser trained. Revealing these dichotomous conditions, Dresser later reflected: “That I was intended by nature as an artist, I do not doubt; but let it ever be remembered that, with a view of causing me to become one, my parents placed me at a ‘school of design;’ as a consequence, I may not be an artist.”<sup>43</sup>

Pursuant to the idea of gearing the process of design to economic measures of success and the rigorous demands of automated production, there developed a movement to codify elements of design. Fueled by the 1859 publication of *On the Origin of Species* by Charles R. Darwin, in which the theory of evolution and the accompanying scientific explanation of diversification in nature was presented, other disciplines adopted and adapted this type of systematic taxonomy. Sympathetic to Darwinian theory concerning the typology of the natural world, Dresser’s academic mentors Gottfried Semper, Owen Jones, and Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), were instrumental in the formative years of developing both the manner in which art and design were taught, in addition to the early development of what would become the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum.<sup>44</sup>

As a result of Redgrave’s lecture “The Importance of Botany to the Ornamentist,” which was given in 1849 and promoted studying plant forms in nature before systematically

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<sup>42</sup> Baker and Richardson, 110.

<sup>43</sup> Christopher Dresser, “Ornamentation Considered as a High Art,” *Journal of the Society of Arts* (vol. XIX, 1871), 352; cited in Michael Whiteway, *Shock of the Old: Christopher Dresser’s Design Revolution* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum in association with the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, 2004), 18.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Eisenman, *Design in the Age of Darwinism: From William Morris to Frank Lloyd Wright* (Evanston, Illinois: The Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, 2008), 9-22. Gottfried Semper was a German architect, art critic, and professor of architecture working in London; Owen Jones was a British architect, decorative artist, author and educator; and Richard Redgrave was an English artist and Superintendent of the Schools of Design.

transforming specimens into ordered, symmetrical ornamentation; and the lectures of Dr. Lyon Playfair, to whom Dresser devoted his first publication, “The Rudiments of Botany,” and said “my love for the natural sciences was first awakened by your lectures” Dresser’s interest in the natural world was piqued.<sup>45</sup> The lectures and Dresser’s explorations of the offerings of Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, under the guidance of Sir William Jackson Hooker, the garden’s director, led him to specialize in botany, becoming the “lecturer of botany and art-botany” at the Schools of Design, where he taught various courses until 1868.<sup>46</sup> Dresser was ultimately granted a Ph.D. in botany in absentia from the University of Jena in Germany in 1859 and Hooker sponsored his membership in the esteemed Linnean Society.<sup>47</sup>

The first major codification of ornament printed in color was Owen Jones’ *The Grammar of Ornament*, published in 1862. Its thirty-seven rules of design, entitled *General Principles in the Arrangement of Form and Color in Architecture and the Decorative Arts*, were accompanied by 100 plates of ornamental designs from twenty different cultures. Dresser, who provided the illustrations for Plate No. 8 of the “Leaves and Flowers from Nature” section, was said to have looked upon this compendium as a “guiding light.”<sup>48</sup> In the book’s preface, Jones encourages that which forms Dresser’s ability to look afresh upon a motif, regardless of its source, and study its intrinsic nature, rather than producing an inadequate copy that would surely fall short of good design:

I have ventured to hope that, in thus bringing into immediate juxtaposition the many forms of beauty which every style of ornament presents, I might aid in arresting that unfortunate tendency of our time to be content with copying,

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<sup>45</sup> Wemyss Reid, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Lyon Playfair, First Lord Playfair of St. Andrews* (New York and London: 1899); cited in Whiteway, 49-50. Students would also draw from flowers sent daily from Kew Gardens to the Schools of Design. Richard Redgrave’s essay “The Importance of Botany to the Ornamentist” can be found in *The Journal of Design and Manufactures I* (March-August-1849).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>47</sup> Eisenman, 17.

<sup>48</sup> Whiteway, 24.

whilst the fashion lasts, the forms peculiar to any bygone age, without attempting to ascertain, generally completely ignoring, the peculiar circumstances which rendered an ornament beautiful, because it was appropriate, and which, as expressive of other wants thus transplanted, as entirely fails.<sup>49</sup>

This passion for botany took the form of a studied approach focusing on the logic and regularity of form, a practice that pervaded Dresser's diverse studies and one that he would employ throughout his life, whatever medium was being explored. He systematically probed the parts of flowers and plants—even insects—believing that the natural forms could be categorized and repurposed as design elements, repeated, serialized, and simplified into ornamental transmutations of botanical entities. As this philosophy crystallized in the designer's work, Dresser was able to embrace both the formalist and structuralist manner demanded by contemporary scientific theory, as well as find an element of freedom in adapting form to an object's function. In Dresser's hands, drawings derived from *Linnaeus' Philosophica Botanica* (1751) were transformed into abstracted design components, and the vertebrae of salamanders form the basis of a complex pattern decorating Dresser's Wedgwood vase of 1867, upon which an amalgamation of skeletal legs, fins, and wings convene in a decidedly unconventional take on the nature of ornament.<sup>50</sup>

In Dresser's 1862 publication, *The Art of Design*, he claims freedom from the parade of historicizing revival styles popular in the late nineteenth-century Victorian era, and asserts that “by observing the aspects of matter when acted upon by various influences, and diligently inquiring into the nature of the mental conception of facts and occurrences, it will be found possible to express feelings and ideas by ornaments without the aid of symbolic forms.”<sup>51</sup> With regard to teaching, Dresser applied his analytical tactics concerning design: “With the simple

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<sup>49</sup> Owen Jones, *The Art of Decorative Design* (London: Day and Son, 1862), 1.

<sup>50</sup> For image see Eisenman, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Dresser, *The Art of Decorative Design* (London: Day and Son, 1862), 37.

purpose of showing the probable origin of some of the features which characterize Japanese art, and of pointing out to the student that research... may be aided by a consideration of ornament not less than by the study of language.”<sup>52</sup> Evidencing the unconventional manner of Dresser’s approach, *The Art Journal* criticized *The Art of Design*: “Dr. Dresser’s theories... startle us; they are so opposed to everything we have been accustomed to regard as beautiful in ornament;” yet the critics’ denunciations had little impact on the trajectory of the designer, who adopted Francis Bacon’s iconic aphorism, “knowledge is power,” as his motto.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly attracted to design sources capable of injecting innovation into hackneyed versions of the past, Dresser was drawn to Japanese art, which he first experienced en masse at the International Exhibition of 1862, or the Great London Exposition.<sup>54</sup> Although the British East India Company had exhibited Japanese objects at the 1851 Great Exhibition and Dutch collectors provided some Japanese works for the 1855 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, the first major representation of Japanese decorative arts was brought to the European public by Sir Rutherford Alcock in 1862. Alcock, Britain’s first ambassador to Japan, capitalized on his diplomatic privilege to travel throughout the country during his three-year station to assemble an impressive cache of ceramics, *ukiyo-e* prints, basketry, lacquerware, metalwork, and woodcarvings. Appreciation for Japan’s aesthetic was evidenced by both the public’s approval of the exhibition, as well as Alcock’s own praise: “In all the mechanical arts the Japanese have unquestionably achieved great excellence. In their porcelain, their bronzes, their silk fabric, their lacquer, and their metallurgy generally, including work of exquisite art in design and execution, I

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> *The Art Journal*; cited in Whiteway, 57. The aphorism is found in Francis Bacon’s *Meditationes Sacrae*, published in 1597.

<sup>54</sup> Widar Halén, *Christopher Dresser* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1990), 33. During his time at the Schools of Design, Dresser was introduced to Japanese art through sample objects used by his professors in conjunction with lectures and had access to the holdings of Japanese art objects at the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum. He was also exposed to auctions and exhibitions of Japanese art in London.

have no hesitation in saying they not only rival the best products of Europe, but can produce in each of these departments works we can imitate, or perhaps equal.”<sup>55</sup> Reflecting upon Alcock’s display of his collection of over six hundred objects of Japanese art, Christopher Dresser later declared: “It was in the year 1862 that I first formed my acquaintance with Japanese art, your Excellency [Alcock]...having in that year brought together a number of objects...as were then altogether new to us...I need not tell your Excellency that you have the honour of having first made Japanese productions known to the English public.”<sup>56</sup>

Dresser’s interest in Alcock’s collection led him to request and receive permission to sketch over eighty of the displayed pieces, and with the close of the exhibition, Dresser confirmed his burgeoning interest in Japanese art by purchasing some of Alcock’s collection: “I became the possessor of a fair selection of the objects which formed your collection; and to the treasures which I thus became possessed of I have almost constantly been adding, till now my house is rather a museum...feeling the beauty of these objects I have done what I could to encourage their introduction into this country.”<sup>57</sup> Beyond introducing Japanese art to England, Dresser’s teachings, lectures and numerous publications persistently implored designers not only to observe and copy the obvious characteristics, but also to delve seriously and analytically into the very nature of the objects. Perhaps he was guided by Henry Cole, who espoused that the institutional purpose of the South Kensington Museum’s collection was not to induce rote copyist exercises: “I do not consider that the mere reproduction of the things we have got is the right use, nor do I think it a principal one, but I think that manufacturers and workmen, and

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<sup>55</sup> Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon A Narrative of Three Year’s Residence in Japan* (New York, 1877), 241-243; cited in Tomoko Sato and Toshio Watanabe, *Japan and Britain: An Aesthetic Dialogue 1850-1930* (London: Lund Humphries in association with Barbican Art Gallery and the Setagaya Art Museum, 1991), 81.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher Dresser, “The Art Manufactures of Japan, from Personal Observation.” *Journal of the Society of Arts* (vol. 26, February 1878), 169; cited in Ayako Ono, *Japonisme in Britain* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 6.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

students, get a general education at the museum.”<sup>58</sup> Speaking specifically of Japanese art, Dresser reproved the French for simplistically mimicking Japanese aesthetics rather than gaining any sort of informed understanding: “They have taken the form, but have not perceived the sentiment of which the shape is but a shroud.”<sup>59</sup>

Objects purchased from Alcock’s collection also formed the nucleus of the Japanese collections of the South Kensington Museum, which would become the Victoria & Albert Museum.<sup>60</sup> The taxonomic strategy with which Dresser approached art and design existed in tandem with the mission of the South Kensington Museum, which sought to systematically amass an encyclopedic collection of art objects, as “models of the highest excellence [need to be] kept before the eyes of artisans, as an inducement and an encouragement to them to attain the highest degree of excellence.”<sup>61</sup> Henry Cole, the museum’s first director, believed that access to these excellent models was imperative not only to the successful advancement of designers and artists, but also to the development of a cultured taste for Britain’s public.<sup>62</sup> Attesting to the success of the Museum’s strategy, the British Parliament heard praise from their arch rival France: “Today, for all of us foreigners South Kensington is a mecca. England there possesses the entire art of Europe and the East...and Europe has been swept into the stream in imitation of England.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Henry Cole, *Cole Miscellanies* (vol. IX, 1853), 80; cited in Baker, 396.

<sup>59</sup> Christopher Dresser, *Department of Science and Art Minute Books* (London, Public Records Office, April 1854); cited in Whiteway, 129.

<sup>60</sup> Baker, 101. The Museum of Manufactures was established in 1852, became the Museum of Ornamental Design in 1853, was renamed the South Kensington Museum in 1857 and then in 1899 renamed the Victoria & Albert Museum, as it is known today. The South Kensington Museum was built with the profits of the 1851 Great Exhibition of London.

<sup>61</sup> Henry Cole, *Cole Miscellanies* (vol. VIII, Cole Diaries, 1854, entries for March 13, 20, 27, and April 10, 13), 223; cited in Baker, 30.

<sup>62</sup> Baker, 396. Henry Cole was adamant regarding free public access to the South Kensington Museum. Including evening hours, the Museum was open and free to the public over half of the time, which was unusual in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Yriarte, *Second Report from the Select Committee* (1897), 493; cited in Baker, 32-33.

It was in 1876 under the guidance of Christopher Dresser that the South Kensington Museum most significantly increased its Japanese holdings in the nineteenth century. Endeavoring to gather “an historical collection of porcelain and pottery from the earliest period until the present day, to be formed in such a way to give fully the history of the art,” the Museum and Cunliffe Owen, who was then its director and the British commissioner for the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, collaborated with Sano Tsunetami, vice president of the Japanese Exhibition Bureau at the World Fair of 1873 in Vienna, to assemble a comprehensive range of Japanese ceramics, which would first be exhibited at the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia.<sup>64</sup> Daily contacts between Dresser and Owen resulted in a selection of 216 Japanese ceramics at the cost of £600.<sup>65</sup>

It is interesting to note that the wares believed by Owen, Dresser, and Sano to be the most representative did not include the typical blue and white porcelains, so valued by the Aesthetic Movement devotees, but rather favored articles such as earthenware tea bowls.<sup>66</sup> By this point Dresser was familiar with and had begun collecting what was referred to in the *Official British Report of the London International Exhibition of 1871* as “drab coloured, rough and unglazed earthenware.”<sup>67</sup> Dresser was also intent on displaying what he regarded as the honesty of Japanese design found in the metalwork construction methods that he had previously seen at the 1873 Vienna International Exhibition. He favored works, specifically kettles, that utilized exposed rivets and joints as design elements, rather than falsely hiding them from sight,

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<sup>64</sup> Philip Cunliffe Owen, *Minutes to the Lords of the Committee of Council Education* (Public Records Office, Education, July 1875) 84/30; cited in Baker, 232.

<sup>65</sup> Whiteway, 39-40.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>67</sup> *Official British Report of the International Exhibition of 1871* (London, 1872), 8; cited in Halén, 38.



claiming: “While the kettle is an object of use in every house in the land, we have to go to Japan to learn how to make one as it should be.”<sup>68</sup>

Previously, both Dresser and the South Kensington Museum had purchased pieces from dealers, including Siegfried Bing, whose 1875 auction offered many Japanese works in diverse media, which inspired many of Dresser’s own designs.<sup>69</sup> Contemporary to Bing’s auction, Dresser’s 1875 *Principles of Design* reveals his appreciation for the Japanese metalworkers’ skill in inlaying silver into bronze and copper, advising Western artisans that “this inlaying...is a step in the right direction, and should be encouraged by all lovers of art.”<sup>70</sup> He further praises Japanese metalwork combined with enamel, expressing that “the work is finer and the color more mingled,” placing the country’s mastery above that of the Chinese, as well as Maison F. Barbedienne, the leading French metalworking firm, and Elkington & Co., Britain’s foremost metalworking firm.<sup>71</sup>

By 1876 Dresser was certainly recognized as an advocate of Japanese arts, and evidence regarding the success of the visionary designer’s efforts to espouse a deeper understanding and appreciation of the country’s aesthetics was growing as well. Moving away from patronizing and demeaning comments, Charles Locke Eastlake, a British architect and furniture designer working in a staunch Gothicist style, begrudgingly acknowledged the superior products from “those nations whose art has long been our custom to despise,” giving Japan as his sole example of such a nation.<sup>72</sup> Even William Burges, leader of the British Medieval Revival movement, conceded in

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<sup>68</sup> Halén, 47. For image of Dresser tea kettle see Eisenman, 86.

<sup>69</sup> Ono, 12. Notably, at Dresser’s death his possessions included very few objects of Western origin, but rather an eclectic mix of objects from Japan, China, Persia, India, Jamaica, Siberia, Romania, Africa, New Zealand and Egypt. Whiteway, 2001, 80.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher Dresser, *Principles of Decorative Design*, 1873 (Reprint, New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1973), 142.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>72</sup> Charles L. Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details*, 1878 (Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 173.

his description of the Japanese Court at the 1862 International Exhibition that “an hour, or even a day or two, spent in the Japanese department will by no means be lost time, for these hitherto barbarians appear not only to know all that the Middle Ages knew, but in some respects are beyond them and us as well.”<sup>73</sup> A comparison of Burges’ decanter of 1865-66, teeming with historic medieval ornamentation, and Dresser’s unadorned and streamlined tureen of a few years later, reveals the vast disparity between designers mired in the past and the progressive designs of Dresser.<sup>74</sup>

Although the general Western view of East Asia was still often defined by the all-encompassing “Orient,” art critics and designers were quite cognizant of the impact that Japan’s art had made in Britain, as stated by architect and designer Owen W. Davis in his *Japanese Ornament*: “In the studio of artists and amateurs we find increasing collections of Japanese, Chinese or other Oriental objects, from inlaid mother-of-pearl cabinets, textile fabrics, faience...in fact it has become a little mania to exercise a show of taste in the quarter.”<sup>75</sup> Not only was the impact recognized, but Dresser was credited with its dissemination as demonstrated by the laudatory words of the British newspaper *The World*:

Among the men who are the best known in Europe, since the present “renaissance” in Decorative Art, none perhaps, has been more thoroughly identified with the new ideas that have grown out of our acquaintance with the Japanese and Chinese methods of decoration than Doctor Christopher Dresser. The active part he took in forming the invaluable collections of the South Kensington Museum, in London; the exquisite taste he displayed in the decoration of the Alexandra Palace, placed him in position, both as a “Connoisseur” and an “Art Decorator”, which will identify

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<sup>73</sup> William Burges, “The Japanese Court in the International Exhibition.” *The Gentlemen’s Magazine* (September 1862), 224; cited in Halén, 35

<sup>74</sup> Not only was Dresser’s design innovative and forward-thinking, but the designer also embraced modern technology that reduced the cost of production, such as silver electroplating. The technique was first patented in 1840 by Elkington & Company, who invented the electroplating industry in Birmingham, England, from where it spread internationally. Subsequent patents in the 1850s and 1860s allowed for more efficient electroplating processes of mass production and large-scale objects. For image of Dresser’s tureen, see Eisenman, 90. For an image of Burges’ decanter, see Baker and Richardson, 333.

<sup>75</sup> Owen W. Davis, *The Builder* (1869), 257; cited in Halén, 38.

his name with the most successful efforts to introduce the new style...and when he came to the exhibition in Philadelphia, his influence and erudition were much sought after in the higher artistic circles.<sup>76</sup>

Established as the principal proponent of Japanese aesthetics, in 1876 Dresser was called on both nationally and internationally to further the interest in and analytical approach to Japanese art that he had ignited in the West. Initiating Dresser's travels to Japan in this year, Cunliffe Owen called on Dresser to personally deliver a gift from the British government of contemporary design products as a donation to the newly built National Museum in Tokyo.<sup>77</sup> The impetus for the bequest originated with the 1874 shipwreck of the *Nil*, the ship bearing Japan's 193 crates of goods collected from the various exhibitors during the World's Fair of 1873 in Vienna, as well as Japanese exposition wares.<sup>78</sup> The *Nil* was a French ship of the *Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes*; it ran aground during a torrential rain storm and sank off the Izu Peninsula, around 100 kilometers southwest of Tokyo. Responding to the loss, Owen encouraged British manufacturers to contribute appropriate replacements, which amounted to 315 examples of England's most prominent firms' designs in all media.<sup>79</sup> Dresser worked closely with Owen and the contributing companies, for many of whom he designed and advised, overseeing this industrial design collaboration, choosing, not surprisingly, products of his own design.<sup>80</sup>

Expanding the demand for Dresser's services were academic institutions, design firms and retail ventures in the United States, who were clamoring for both an understanding of his methods of teaching and grasp of true Japanese art—as best any Westerner was capable—to

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<sup>76</sup> *The World* (April 21, 1877); cited in Halén, 44-45.

<sup>77</sup> Whiteway, 132.

<sup>78</sup> Doi, 28. A year a half later, a portion of the ship's cargo was raised and approximately sixty-eight crates of the original 193 were salvaged, the contents being divided between the Tokyo and Kyoto National Museums.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* For image of objects donated by English manufacturers and brought to Japan by Christopher Dresser in 1876 see Doi, 30-31.

<sup>80</sup> Halén, 42.

guide the growing American enthusiasm for all things Japanese. This enthusiasm would be greatly fueled by the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia.

As Dresser was the art advisor to the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha, and was charged with the production of wares for export and exhibition at international expositions, he was instrumental in the selection of objects displayed by the Japanese at the Centennial Exposition, which focused not only on wares made with Victorian tastes in mind, but also ancient pieces.<sup>81</sup> Paralleling Dresser's own collection practices of the time, the designer chose ceramics which he felt derived from kiln sites "where no evil influence of bad European taste has been felt."<sup>82</sup> When speaking of Japanese metalwork tradition, the designer notes that "the art of metal casting is of great antiquity, and it appears to have been carried to a high state of perfection at an early period," and claims that "during the Middle Ages bronze casting, chasing, engraving, gilding and the various processes connected with the goldsmith's art, were so perfect that they have never been excelled."<sup>83</sup>

Dresser's voyage to Japan began with a nine-month stay in the United States before he departed from San Francisco. Dresser was well received in the country and lauded by the *New York Times*: "One of the most perfect specimens of art intellect shipped to the U.S. for the exhibition at Philadelphia was, without doubt, Dr. Christopher Dresser. He styles himself 'art advisor' and is well known to American designers and art manufacturers by several publications...."<sup>84</sup> In addition to attending the Centennial Exposition, Dresser delivered a three-part lecture series, free to the public and sponsored by the newly opened Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industry, propagating the

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<sup>81</sup> Whiteway, 41.

<sup>82</sup> Halén, 41. Dresser collected Awata, Amaji, Banko, Raku, Tamba and Takatori ceramics, among others.

<sup>83</sup> Christopher Dresser, *Japan, Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures*. 1882 (Reprint, New York: Kegan Paul, 2001), 415.

<sup>84</sup> *The New York Times* (6 May 1877), 10; cited in Halén, 40-41.

importance of collaboration between the government, design schools, and industrial manufacturers. Reporting on Dresser's lectures, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted that Dresser "attracted great attention and the room was filled to overflowing," as the designer credited the South Kensington Museum as the sole reason that "enabled England to make such an advance in industrial art as had never been made by any nation in a similar period of time."<sup>85</sup>

Dresser then met with the wallpaper firm of Wilson & Fenimores, with whom he signed contracts and submitted patents for thirty unique designs of paper hangings, many displaying Dresser's interests in Japanese design.<sup>86</sup> For similar purposes, he met with John J. McGrath to discuss plans to mount an exhibition of leading English, French and American designers, which came to fruition in 1879 with an expansive display of over three hundred wallpaper designs, including Dresser's.<sup>87</sup> These commercial ventures in America served to broadcast Dresser's designs and principles of Japanese art throughout the country, where they were eagerly received, especially after the great success of the Japanese showing at the exposition.

Finally, before departing for Japan, Dresser met with the senior staff of Tiffany & Company, who had commissioned him to collect Japanese *objets d'art* for sale as well as for their design libraries. Upon Dresser's return to Europe via America, he delivered over eight thousand objects of Japanese art to Tiffany, including ceramics, textiles, jewelry, metalwork, enamelwork and lacquerware.<sup>88</sup> Approximately half of Dresser's finds were retained by the company and over 1,902 lots were auctioned by Leavitt Auctioneers on June 18, 1877.<sup>89</sup> The auction, entitled *Dresser Collection of Japanese Curios selected for Messrs. Tiffany Co.*, was the event of the exhibition season in the city and was described as "the largest and most important

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<sup>85</sup> "Art Museum." *The Philadelphia Enquirer* (3, November 1876), 2; cited in Whiteway, 118.

<sup>86</sup> Whiteway, 118-120.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Halén, 44.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

collection of Japanese goods ever offered for sale” and as eclipsing “the collection of the Metropolitan [Museum of Art], from the fact that its display was more brilliant and varied, and hence more interesting to the modern eyes.”<sup>90</sup> The *Graphic Journal* noted the authenticity of the Japanese wares as distinct from exportware:

[They are] novel even to those who have long studied Japanese bric-a-brac... this novelty proceeds from the peculiar system of Dr. Dresser, who has made it his especial point of collecting the common utensils, the coarser potteries, the conveniences of common life in Japan, well surmising that articles of this kind would bear as distinctly as any others the cachet of Oriental taste, and would be more fresh for connoisseurs and more suggestive to artisans than the now well-known fabrications of distinctly artistic intention.<sup>91</sup>

Dresser later reflected that the objects he collected for Tiffany had shaped the company’s understanding of Japanese aesthetics and significantly impacted their silversmith work, which was recognized with a prestigious international exposition award:

I certainly had the honour of being entrusted by Messrs. Tiffany & Company with the choice of any objects that I might think calculated to aid in their silversmith business; and it is interesting to me to know that, after a most careful and intelligent consideration of these objects, Messrs. Tiffany & Co. produced new works which produced to the firm the “Grand Prix” at the last Paris Exhibition [in 1878].<sup>92</sup>

Dresser’s booking on the steamship *City of Tokio* for December 2, 1876 proved to be fortuitously advantageous, for his fellow traveling companions were the eleven Japanese delegates to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.<sup>93</sup> Dresser became friendly with the delegation, including General Saigo, the vice president of the Japanese commission and

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<sup>90</sup> *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* (9 June 1877); cited in Halén, 44.

<sup>91</sup> *The Graphic Journal* (20 April 1877); cited in Halén, 44.

<sup>92</sup> Dresser, 1882, 415-430.

<sup>93</sup> Lyons, 32-35.

confidante of the Japanese Emperor.<sup>94</sup> Upon Dresser's arrival in Japan, Saigo arranged for the designer to meet directly with the Emperor to present the gift of the British government from the South Kensington Museum. The objects were intended to be a study collection for the Tokyo National Museum. Upon their display at the first National Exhibition at Ueno Park in Tokyo in 1877, Machida Hisanari, the Museum's director, claimed that the collection "has provided new ideas...and your [Dresser's] visit to the Orient contributed considerable stimulus for our eyes and minds. Japanese artists should be grateful to you...and your own country, who thanks to you have been able to become acquainted with traditional products from Japan."<sup>95</sup>

Granted semi-official status by the Emperor, Dresser was given permission to travel freely in Japan, an exceptional privilege for a foreigner.<sup>96</sup> Covering 1,700 miles, over 100 temples and hundreds of art industries, Dresser's activities were documented with over 1,000 photographs and chronicled by Sakata Haruo and Ishida Tametake, two officials from the Home Office.<sup>97</sup> The Home Minister, Okubo Toshimichi, had asked Dresser to advise the various Japanese manufacturers on modern industrial methods. Ishida's official report to the Japanese government, *Dresser Hokoku*, recounts Ishida's and Sakata's impressions of the designer's respect for traditional Japanese aesthetics.<sup>98</sup> Although the report relates Dresser's suggestions for adapting modern production techniques to the artisans' processes, Dresser strongly encouraged the artists to maintain their aesthetic traditions. Unlike Western metal casting techniques that use the same model repeatedly, "the Japanese method consisted in a fresh model being made for

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Machida Hisanari, *Tokyo National Museum Acquisitions Catalogue and Miscellanies* (Vol. II, no. 2, 1880); cited in Halén, 43.

<sup>96</sup> Whiteway, 132-133. In addition to being granted permission to travel throughout Japan, Dresser was also offered full reimbursement for his travel expenses from the Japanese government.

<sup>97</sup> The photographs have apparently been lost.

<sup>98</sup> Whiteway, 132-133.

every work produced.”<sup>99</sup> Dresser comments that although the process is laborious, he believes “that the Japanese gain as much as they lose by their processes. Nothing is so calculated to remove from man a true perception of art qualities as seeing hundreds of works precisely alike. The mere fact of seeing a number of duplicates...is calculated to weaken our appreciation of the beautiful.”<sup>100</sup> During Dresser’s visit, the *Japanese Mail* noted that “Mr. Dresser has the further and very weighty object in view of impressing upon the decorative artists of Japan the high importance of preserving intact those distinctive and peculiar merits in Japanese art...that these are now in great danger is certain.”<sup>101</sup>

While in Japan, Dresser also chronicled the encounters brought about by his rigorous and extensive itinerary in a two-part volume, entitled *Japan, Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers* (1882). Each chapter was profusely illustrated with the designer’s sketches, covering his assessments of particular locations and various art industries, categorized by media. Dresser also wrote about his encounters with artists, including Suzuki Chōkichi, whose casting of a flight of birds that was shown at the 1873 Vienna Exposition was thought by the designer to be “the most notable work ever produced by the flowing of molten metal in to a mould.”<sup>102</sup> Chōkichi invited Dresser to his foundry in Tokyo, where the metalworker demonstrated the technique with which he had so realistically and precisely cast the tail feathers of the peacocks of the incense burner presented at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1878. Dresser wrote that “up to the time when this marvellous [sic] casting was brought before the eyes of Europe nothing approaching it had ever been produced, I believe, by any people or in any time.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Dresser, 1882, 418.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

<sup>101</sup> *The Japanese Mail* (11 January 1877), 16; cited in Halén, 42.

<sup>102</sup> Dresser, 1882, 418.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*



For the nineteenth-century Western audience, the idea of mixing precious silver, gold, and bronze with baser metals such as copper, iron, and steel somewhat reduced the value of the object based on the worth of the material used. Whereas the amount of labor was not completely dismissed, often the significance and importance of the artistic merit were not sufficiently factored into the retail price of metalwork in Europe or America. From his Japan travels, the designer determined:

The Japanese are the only perfect metal-workers which the world has yet produced, for they are the only people who do not think of the material, and regard the effect produced as of greater moment than the metal employed. To them, iron, zinc, bismuth, gold, silver, and copper, are only so many materials with which things of beauty may be produced, and the one is as acceptable as the other, if perfect appropriateness is seen in the application of the material, and if the result produced be satisfactory and beautiful.<sup>104</sup>

With *Japan*, Dresser endeavored to change Western design philosophy regarding mixed metalworks by promoting his belief in producing affordable, well-designed wares. He did not have a proclivity toward expensive materials, nor did he believe that the value of a design should be contingent on the value of the materials from which it was composed:

So long as we value the material rather than the art, and insist upon purchasing art objects by the ounce, we can never attain to true knowledge ... Fancy paying for an oratorio by the length of time taken up in recital, or purchasing a picture by the yard! Yet if a silver teapot is purchased its weight is demanded, as though the material were not altogether insignificant when compared with the knowledge and skill expended on its production. If a teapot has been formed by a man who has no art knowledge, and who has simply expended upon its production so many hours of labour, then it is right to determine both the value of the labourer's time and the cost of the material; but if the work be beautiful, and if it conveys to the beholder the knowledge and refinement of an educated artist, then it is ridiculous to estimate its value as though the material of which it is composed were of greater worth than the amount of life, thought, and painstaking care expended upon its production.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 429-430.

Whether summing up the designer's personal thoughts or detailing the technical analysis of damascening with precious metals, Dresser's account, coupled with Ishida's *Dresser Hokoku*, afforded the Western world an incredibly comprehensive picture of contemporary Meiji Japan and the state of its art manufacturers. Stemming from his four-month experience in the country, Dresser's *Japan* would serve as the basis for numerous presentations and further publications, and would ultimately become one of the most compelling forces of the British Aesthetic Movement. Dresser lectured widely upon his return, utilizing the many objects he gleaned for his personal collections to illustrate his ideas. Dresser's Japanese collection also served as a tremendous source of inspiration for his own designs, which included sleek silver vessels with straight wooden handles, derivative of a saké container seen by the designer in the collections at the Shōsōin, the treasure house of the Tōdai-ji Buddhist temple complex in Nara, as well as Japanese crests (*mon*) and diaper-patterned decorations. Other creations included toast racks reminiscent of abstracted Japanese fences, bridges, or *torii* gates.<sup>106</sup>

Dresser's commercial import ventures with Japanese wares had begun with his appointment as art advisor to the Alexandra Palace Company, which, at the conclusion of the 1873 Vienna International Exposition, approached the Japanese government with an offer to purchase their display pavilion and garden, as well as their remaining stock, which had been supplied by Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha.<sup>107</sup> The pavilion was reconstructed at Sydenham Palace, where Japanese crafts were sold in partnership with the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha.<sup>108</sup> The same year, Dresser had also been named as art adviser to the newly established Londos & Company, which

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 430.

<sup>106</sup> For image of Dresser's toast rack see <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1985.311>.

<sup>107</sup> Impey, 1995, *Meiji no takara*, Vol. I, 78.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. After the Crystal Palace built for the 1851 World's Fair in London by Joseph Paxton was disassembled, it moved to Sydenham, where it stood for the next eighty-five years as the Sydenham Palace.

also traded with Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha.<sup>109</sup> Following his Japan visit, many objects collected by Dresser for Londos were shipped to England for sale, and many of these items were consequently purchased by the South Kensington Museum, including a patinated bronze vase that inspired a jardinière designed by Dresser for Benham and Froud.<sup>110</sup> Ever enterprising, in 1879 Dresser and Charles Holmes founded Dresser & Holmes, a Japanese import business; his sons Christopher and Louis were stationed in Kobe to manage the Japanese end of the business.<sup>111</sup>

Dresser continued his many entrepreneurial engagements and also his advocacy for the adaptation of exemplary Japanese aesthetics into everyday design. At a lecture, entitled “The Art Manufacture of Japan,” he stated: “I firmly believe that the introduction of the works of Japanese handicraftsmen into England has done as much to improve our national taste as even our schools of art and public museums, great as is the good which they have achieved; for the Japanese objects have got into our homes, and amongst them we live.”<sup>112</sup> The idea of living among not only Japanese objects but also with Japanese people was fully brought to fruition with the establishment of a Japanese village in South Kensington, opened in 1885 by Dresser’s ally, Sir Rutherford Alcock. Inhabited by over 200 Japanese, the village’s five streets bustled with artistic pursuits; the site was declared to be the manifestation of Dresser’s “descriptions of the talent and painstaking methods of Japanese artisans and artists.”<sup>113</sup> Deemed “Japan in England,” this conceptualized version of Japan had been realized at the apogee of the British Aesthetic Movement and built in South Kensington, the very place that cultivated Christopher Dresser’s

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<sup>109</sup> Halén, 17.

<sup>110</sup> Whiteway, 88-89.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>112</sup> Christopher Dresser, “The Art Manufacturers of Japan.” *Journal of the Society of Arts* (1878), 169; cited in Ono, 23.

<sup>113</sup> *Cabinet Maker and Art Furnisher’s Journal* (1881), 181; cited in Halén, 65. The Japanese Native Village, which existed from 1885-1887, was visited by Christopher Dresser, who was said to be generally impressed.

theories and systematic analysis of Japanese ornament, design and art. Described as a “genial companion [who] never tired of discussion on Art and the habits of the nations of the East,” the designer with his indefatigable pursuits brought about an enlightened Western understanding of the true expression of Japan’s artistic endeavors, which Dresser transformed into the modern aesthetic that would inform the next century.<sup>114</sup>

## **Chapter II: Sources of Japanese Aesthetics and the Impact on Gorham and Tiffany Silver**

Recalling the British hallmarking system initiated in the fifteenth century, the maker’s mark of the Gorham Manufacturing Company features a lion passant and an Old English script “G.” These adaptations of European symbols stand in secondary position as they flank an anchor taken from the state flag of Gorham’s home, which features this symbol of hope surrounded by thirteen stars and a blue ribbon inscribed with the same motto. Gorham was established in Providence, Rhode Island in 1831 by Jabez Gorham (1792-1869), a fifth-generation New Englander who followed the traditional path of becoming a silversmith by signing a seven-year apprenticeship indenture contract in 1806 at the age of fourteen with Nehemiah Dodge, a local smith and jeweler. By the 1820s, Jabez had established his business on Steeple Street, where the company would prosper for the next sixty years, until it would build a thirty-seven acre state-of-the-art facility on Adelaide Avenue in 1890.

In contrast, Jabez’s son, John, turned his back on the institution of apprenticeship after only a brief stint of a few months, preferring to clerk at other local businesses. By this time, Jabez had achieved financial success and he sold his silver business to Henry Webster in 1841 and retired.

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<sup>114</sup> *The Builder* (1904), 610; cited in Whiteway, 139.

This was to be a short-lived arrangement, however; Webster chose to pursue an adventure in Boston and offered to sell the business back to Jabez, who decided to seize the opportunity under one condition: that his son John would run the business as his partner. John Gorham (1820-1898) became a partner of J. Gorham & Son in 1841, and was quick to advocate the necessity of modernization to ensure the success of the company. His father disagreed and sold his entire interest to his son, leaving John the sole owner and initiating a period of great change and growth at Gorham. Boldly asserting that mechanization of flatware production was the way of the future, John Gorham sought to expand the company's production from coin-silver spoons to a vast array of silverwares, as well as to develop a marketing strategy that moved from regional to global proportions.<sup>115</sup> To underscore the revolutionary vision of John Gorham, up until this modernization was proposed, power was provided by a horse-driven shaft—the horse was named Old Dick—and wares were sold by peddlers who rarely reached beyond New England.<sup>116</sup>

After procuring new talent from New York and an array of new tools and equipment, Gorham produced its first pieces of hollowware in 1850, one being a tea service with detailed landscaped scenes and a spout and handle entwined with naturalistic leaves and flowers.<sup>117</sup> Shown at the 1850 Providence Fair of the Society for the Encouragement of Domestic Industry and the Rhode Island Horticultural Society, the tea service was described by the *Providence Journal* as “superbly elegant, perfect in design and execution and reflects the highest credit upon the manufacturers.”<sup>118</sup> Recognizing the city's first specimens of locally produced hollowware,

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<sup>115</sup> Coin-silver spoons were made in America between 1800-1860 from melted-down silver coins—mainly U.S. dollar coins—with a fineness ranging from 900-1000 fine. They were very lightweight and flexible, being made from the minimum amount of silver. For further information, see Harold Newman, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Silverware* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 81.

<sup>116</sup> Charles H. Carpenter, *Gorham Silver 1831-1981* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1982), 30.

<sup>117</sup> Hollowware refers to articles of silver that are hollow, such as a vase or pitcher, as distinguished from dining implements, which are referred to as flatware. For an image of the teapot from the 1850 Gorham tea service see Carpenter, 42.

<sup>118</sup> *Providence Journal*, 19 September 1850, p.2.

the reporter continued noting that the “wealth of our city will see that it need not go abroad for the most luxurious ornaments for the table. Providence has long been distinguished by its manufacture of...silver ware; but hollow ware of silver has not, we believe, been before attempted here.”<sup>119</sup>

By 1852 a company advertisement in *The Rhode Island Almanac* boasted twenty-seven different types of hollowware for sale, accompanied by thirty-five different types of flatware.<sup>120</sup> The year was to be one of absolute transformation for what had become Gorham and Company. John Gorham’s three-month trip to Europe would bring the first steam-powered drop press to American silver production. Upon arriving in Europe, Gorham went straight to James Nasmyth, an English inventor who had shown his steam hammer at the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations.<sup>121</sup> Nasmyth, failing to convince his countrymen of the virtues of his invention, was said by Gorham to have remarked when they met: “I have been trying for years to adopt the steam press without success, and here come a Yankee across the water expressly to have one built.”<sup>122</sup> Evidencing Gorham’s prescient purchase, the company’s sales rose from \$29,000 to \$397,000 between 1850-1859, and the number of employees rose from fourteen to over two hundred; by the 1860s the company was the largest producer of silverware in the world.<sup>123</sup>

John Gorham’s second trip to Europe in 1860 would bring increasingly sophisticated equipment and staff to the company. Modelers, chasers, and designers were hired from London

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Gorham & Thurber advertisement in *The Rhode Island Almanac for the Year 1852*, cited in Carpenter (1982), 46.

<sup>121</sup> Steam-powered drop presses formed hollowware and flatware by means of placing a silver blank, a rectangle or disk of silver approx. ¾” thick, into a die made of steel, which was usually composed of two parts for two halves of a vessel or two sides of a piece of flatware. The hammer, which weighed 500-1000 pounds, was elevated by means of steam power and dropped onto the dies, thus forcing the silver into the form of the dies.

<sup>122</sup> John Gorham, *John Gorham’s History*, 1893 (I. Historical, I. Gorham Family, File 18, Box 1, p. 24-5), The Gorham Manufacturing Company Archives (GMCA), The John Hay Library, Brown University.

<sup>123</sup> Carpenter (1982), 41.

and Paris to work under the auspices of Gorham's first director of design, George Wilkinson (1819-1901), who joined the firm in 1860. Wilkinson oversaw the ongoing progression through a repertory of historicized designs until a new trajectory greatly impacted the company's stylistic direction from repurposed to revelatory. Although absent from the 1862 London World's Fair as a result of the Civil War's devastation and depression, John Gorham returned to Europe for a third trip that not surprisingly corresponded with the 1867 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, at which Gorham would assumedly have encountered Japan's displays.<sup>124</sup> As opposed to the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, in Paris, the Japanese exercised greater control over their displays by both selecting the objects and organizing the manner in which they were presented, thus more accurately representing that which the Japanese prized among their arts, alongside objects selected for the Western market. Little time would pass before Japanese aesthetics made their way from Paris to Providence, making their mark on Gorham silver.

Four silver bowls by Gorham, measuring four-and-a-half inches in diameter and marked with the Gorham date letter "B" for 1869, are the first known works of an American silver company decorated with Japanese-inspired designs.<sup>125</sup> Tiffany did not produce a comparable Japanesque ware until four years later. The Japanese fans, butterflies, bamboo, and Aesthetic style borders engraved on the bowls would reappear in Gorham's *Japanese* flatware pattern, which was introduced on June 17, 1871.<sup>126</sup> Unlike typical American silver flatware, each handle design differed in shape and decoration, comprised of a pastiche of Japanesque elements, such as pagodas, pines, dragonflies, chrysanthemum, crests (*mon*), song birds and geese, against various

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<sup>124</sup> Charles Venable, *Silver in America 1840-1940: A Century of Splendor* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), 27, 32. Note 63 states that Gorham purchased a device for regulating the amount of silver deposited on silverplate at the 1867 Paris fair; the device is cited in the 1868 *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 445.

<sup>125</sup> For image of Gorham bowls see Carpenter, 103.

<sup>126</sup> The Gorham Manufacturing Company, *Flatware Costing Book* (61-66), GMCA.

textured grounds. Available in Gorham's catalogs until 1894, the *Japanese* pattern was offered in a wide range of pieces from place knives, forks and spoons to more specialized implements, such as horseradish spoons, oyster forks, macaroni knives, and ice cream slices. There are twelve distinct known handle designs, four of which have two known variations each and one of which has five known variations. Decorations range from a peacock resting on a perch among grasses and a kimono-clad female carrying a parasol to a robed male juggler and a hatted man with a fan and a fishing pole, from which a fish dangles on a string amidst reeds.<sup>127</sup> Gorham had adopted the idea that objects that are similar in decoration and form, but not matching exactly, such as the *Japanese* flatware pattern handle designs, displayed a particularly Japanese character. The exact source of this conclusion is unknown, but a printed notice in the fitted case of a Gorham child's flatware set with different handle forms and decorations stated that although the pieces varied, the set was "matched" in the "Japanese style."<sup>128</sup> Both Gorham and Tiffany experimented with "Japanese style" matched forms within Aesthetic sets, including tea and coffee services and flatware patterns, such as a Tiffany service designed for Louise Waldron Elder Havemeyer, wife of American industrialist Henry O. Havemeyer, who appreciated that each piece varied in composition and theme, stating that the "hammered silver set...was made for me by Tiffany...who adopted it from the Japanese."<sup>129</sup>

Edward C. Moore (1827–1891), Tiffany's designer from 1868 until his death, often traveled to Europe and is believed to have attended the 1862 International Exhibition in London and the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 in Paris. Moore designed two Japanesque flatware patterns for

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<sup>127</sup> William P. Hood Jr., John R. Olson, and Charles S. Curb, "Gorham's *Japanese* Flatware Pattern," *The Magazine Antiques* (September 2007), 106. Comparisons and images of twelve patterns and their variations are available on [www.fabulousflatware.com](http://www.fabulousflatware.com) in conjunction with this article. For image of Gorham's *Japanese* flatware pattern see Carpenter, 103.

<sup>128</sup> Doreen Bolger Burke, et al., *In Pursuit of Beauty: America and the Aesthetic Movement* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 262, 292.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* The statement was written in the undated typescript, "Notes to Her Children," by Louise Waldron Havemeyer, now in the Thomas J. Watson Library, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Tiffany: the *Japanese* pattern, which was introduced in 1871 and patented on April 18th of that year, just two months before Gorham's introduction of its *Japanese* flatware pattern; and the *Vine* pattern, which was first made in 1872.<sup>130</sup> Tiffany's *Japanese* flatware pattern featured eighteen different motifs with birds, of which five are identifiable and native to Asia and three are fictitious.<sup>131</sup> After transferring Westernized Japanese aesthetics to small-scale wares and flatware patterns of essentially Western form, both Tiffany and Gorham endeavored to create vessels which embraced Japanese design. These works included and combined Westernized Japanese designs, reproductions of Japanese designs, Japanese alloys and patinas, Japanese metalworking processes, and American adaptations thereof.

The Tiffany archives contain sketchbooks of Moore's, the second of which dates from 1855 to 1873; Japaneseque designs account for approximately one-third of the drawings in the volume.<sup>132</sup> Although it can be documented that Moore designed Japanese hollowware as early as 1871, as exemplified by design #3484 for a centerpiece bowl with Japanese diaperwork stamped "Dec. 5, 1871," the actual production of a piece of Japanese Tiffany silver cannot be confirmed until 1873.<sup>133</sup> It was not until 1878 that an element from the centerpiece drawing was manifested as the base for a Tiffany vase modeled in the form of a bronze brush pot from Moore's collection of Japanese art. The first documented pieces of Tiffany Japanese silver were produced in 1873, including the *Daisy Work* teapot, made from a drawing dated October 30, 1872, and a cylindrical covered box identified in Tiffany's records as a "Tea Caddy-Japanese

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<sup>130</sup> Tiffany's *Japanese* flatware pattern is now known as the *Audubon* pattern.

<sup>131</sup> Janet Zapata, "Tiffany's Japanese Flatware: Birds of Many Feathers," *The Magazine Antiques* (January/February 1995), 10-17. The identifiable birds are not indigenous to Japan and most are Chinese in origin, suggesting that Edward C. Moore may have been looking at a Chinese design source, believing that it was Japanese.

<sup>132</sup> Charles Carpenter, *Tiffany Silver* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), 29.

<sup>133</sup> John Loring, *Magnificent Tiffany Silver* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 26, illustrations p. 25.

Box,” with applied cherry blossoms and a monogram (ELR) engraved to resemble Japanese calligraphy.<sup>134</sup>

Gorham’s kettle and lampstand stamped with a “D” for 1871 is recognized as the company’s first piece of Japonique hollowware, as well as the first piece of American Japonique hollowware.<sup>135</sup> The melon-shaped kettle is designed after a Japanese iron pot with a basketry handle, which is mimicked in silver on the Gorham model. Two round panels encircled with stylized geometric borders that repeat around the lid and spout depict a seated Japanese couple dressed in robes with a grouping of faux Japanese characters consisting of wavy lines to their right, and a robed Japanese male figure leaning backwards, straining to balance the weight of a traditional Japanese handheld wooden water bucket in his left hand. These illustrations most likely derive from illustrated Japanese books in the Gorham design library.<sup>136</sup>

The 1875 photograph book of Gorham’s flatware offers several Japonique designs, comprising approximately four percent of the patterns available; this had doubled by 1879 and by 1883 Japonique designs comprised approximately twenty-five percent of Gorham’s patterns.<sup>137</sup> As Gorham’s Japonique silver offerings expanded, so too did their marketing of the virtues of its original source. An 1876 Gorham promotional publication lauds the company’s admiration of and submission to Japanese aesthetics:

The Japonique style of decoration is justly popular, for it is the outcome of a careful study of Nature. The ordinary Japanese forms for design are not great in number, yet they constantly recur in great and endless variety, and

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 26; Carpenter (1978), 190. For image of Tiffany *Daisy Work* teapot see Loring, 34. For image of Tiffany tea caddy see Carpenter (1978), fig. 260.

<sup>135</sup> RISD Object Intake Form, object file 80.155a-d, Decorative Arts and Design Department, Rhode Island School of Design Museum. Marked with stamp of retailer T. Kirkpatrick NY. For an image of the Gorham kettle see Carpenter (1982), 104.

<sup>136</sup> See page Chapter II of this dissertation for discussion about the two volumes of *Tenmangū godenki ryaku* as a possible source.

<sup>137</sup> *Photographs of Silver Ware, Manufactured by the Gorham Manufacturing Company* (Providence: Gorham Manufacturing Company, 1875), n.p., GMCA.

always with fresh and pleasing novelty of combination. Coming straight from Nature, the fountain head of all good design, it is perhaps one of the chief reasons why it impresses us with a freshness which gives great effect with few lines.<sup>138</sup>

Novelty and freshness were certainly keenly sought design attributes in the wake of consecutive Western historic revivals that had reached an apex by the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, and the array of Japanese wares at the exhibition was a catalyst in fueling the mania in the United States for Japanese design, which played a significant part in the development of the American Aesthetic Movement, which spanned the 1870s to 1880s. The movement served to elevate the decorative arts to the perceived higher level of the fine arts, thus attempting to abolish the demarcation between the two contrived categories. Endeavoring to reform the contemporary taste for historicized revival styles, the Aesthetic Movement sought new sources of inspiration, principally exotic examples of flattened yet intricately patterned design. The combined simplicity and exoticism of Japanese design was considered particularly *avant-garde* and innovative in nineteenth-century America and served as an exceptional vehicle with which to introduce the idea of geometric minimalism mixed with realistic depictions of nature.

Very few American firms participated in world's fairs from 1851 to 1873; some had participated in national fairs, but the major debut of American silver firms at international expositions was the 1876 Centennial Exhibition held in Philadelphia, at which Gorham, Tiffany, and more than fifteen other significant firms displayed their finest.<sup>139</sup> Certainly a domestic setting, the promotion of American centennial patriotism, and a slow market induced a high level of participation. The Philadelphia fair raised the bar with regard to both quality and quantity of

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<sup>138</sup> The Gorham Manufacturing Company, *American Sterling Silverware: A Sketch of the Gorham Manufacturing Company of Providence & New York* (Providence: The Gorham Manufacturing Company, 1876), n.p., GMCA.

<sup>139</sup> Venable, 107.

exhibitors and attendees, and silver firms were eager to showcase their wares to the nearly ten million visitors that attended the fair over seven months, raising \$3,813,749.75, which was more than three-and-a-half times the profit garnered by the 1873 Vienna world's fair.<sup>140</sup> Competition was strong among the 30,864 exhibitors, each of which were charged participation fees by the fair promoters and were responsible for building their own pavilions and displays.<sup>141</sup>

Silver firms devoted substantial resources to showcasing the best they had to offer, while trying to keep expense in check in the midst of an economic depression. American silver firm Reed and Barton exhibited no less than 1,040 pieces of silver in a pavilion costing \$15,000, while the Gorham board of directors scrambled to find reasonable accommodations for the ranks of employees needed to run its pavilion filled with a series of glass cases of both works made for the fair and previously made wares.<sup>142</sup> Gorham's major pieces were celebrations of American patriotism and lore in the Renaissance Revival style, such as the *Neptune Epergne*, crowned by Columbia, from the sizeable Furber Service made from 1873-1879, and the *Hiawatha's Boat* centerpiece, which was acquired by Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant and kept on the sideboard of the private dining room of the White House and used for many state dinners.<sup>143</sup> Weighing in at 137 pounds of sterling silver, standing four feet tall by five feet wide, valued at \$25,000 and requiring nearly eighteen thousand hours of labor, Gorham's classical *Century Vase* commanded the center of their pavilion, featuring the history of the republic and culminating with an

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<sup>140</sup> James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition Held in Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of American Independence*. 1876 (Reprint, Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1975), 291-92.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>142</sup> Venable, 108.

<sup>143</sup> William G. Allman and Melissa C. Naulin, *Something of Splendor: Decorative Arts from the White House* (District of Columbia: White House Historical Association, 2011), 46. The Gorham *Neptune Epergne* is in the collections of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, accession number: 1991.126.80; for an image see: [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/958\\_neptune\\_epergne](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/958_neptune_epergne), accessed March 2, 2015.

allegorical female figure of America, described as “inviting and welcoming all nations to unite with her in celebrating the triumph of her Centennial year.”<sup>144</sup>

James D. McCabe, who meticulously chronicled the Philadelphia Exhibition in a 302-page illustrated volume, chose to include six engravings of Gorham’s work, claiming that the company was “famous as the first manufacturers of silver and fine plated ware in America” and had “fully sustained their well-earned reputation by their display here.”<sup>145</sup> His praise for Japan’s displays, especially the metalwork, was equally favorable:

It was three times as large as the Egyptian space, and was filled in every part with a rich and valuable display, the variety and beauty of which were one of the great surprises of the Exhibition....A number of superb bronze vases were included in this collection, which were the wonder and admiration of all visitors. They were of beautiful shapes, and were ornamented with such a profusion of engraving and chasing...that a photograph would be necessary to have an accurate idea of them. The work was unique and cannot be reproduced by the most skilful artificer in either Europe or America.<sup>146</sup>

Underscoring the newness of Japanese art to the fair attendees, while alluding to the nation’s questionable merit, McCabe concludes his summary of the Japanese presentation promising a fairgoer that only a brief encounter of the display will “amend his ideas of Japan,” a country formerly thought of as “half-civilized at the best,” but now recognized as a “high civilization” that “outshines the most cultivated nations of Europe in arts.”<sup>147</sup>

While America was embracing the wave of Japanese design infiltrating the county, Tiffany and Gorham were filling their design libraries with copious examples of Japanese objects and volumes of illustrated Japanese art books, as well as titles in French and English on Japanese

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<sup>144</sup> Alexander Farnum, *The Story of the Century Vase* (Providence: Livermore & Knight for the Gorham Manufacturing Company, 1876), n.p. Gorham published a 32-page booklet for the Centennial Exposition, a portion of which is quoted in James McCabe’s 1876 *Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*. For an image of Gorham’s *Century Vase* see Carpenter, 78. The *Century Vase* was melted down in the 1930s (Venable, 335).

<sup>145</sup> McCabe, 127.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

art. An 1885 photograph of what Tiffany called the “Designing Room” depicts over twenty designers and apprentices seated at drawing tables, surrounded by walls densely covered with myriad design models and punctuated with large windows.<sup>148</sup> The Designing Room, located at the company’s factory and silver workshops at 53 & 55 Prince Street in New York City, was described by a journalist for the *Jewelers’ Weekly* in 1878: “Our first impression as we enter is that we have strayed into the museum of Natural History. All around us are well preserved counterfeits of birds and smaller animals, as also gourds, ears of corn, grasses, etc., all of which have already served, or still serve, as studies.”<sup>149</sup> The journalist further observed that the “busy designers” have at their disposal “plaster casts, models and electrotypes of designs which have graced work previously done,” and noted that the collections include Oriental objects.<sup>150</sup> The design library’s core collection of Japanese art was established when the senior staff of Tiffany & Company met with British designer Christopher Dresser and commissioned him to collect Japanese *objets d’art* for sale, as well as for their design libraries, during his trip to Japan in 1876, following the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. Dresser delivered over eight thousand objects of Japanese art to Tiffany, including ceramics, textiles, jewelry, metalwork, enamelwork, and lacquerware, half of which were retained by the company.<sup>151</sup>

With the importation of such an assemblage of Japanese material brought directly from Japan, the possibility of importation of Japanese metalworkers as well would seem a possibility. There exist conflicting accounts, such as Siegfried Bing’s statement in his 1895 book *Artistic America* that Moore had “invited teams of Japanese craftsmen to America” and Tiffany’s own 1877 promotional brochure freely admitting that “the spirit of Japanese Art has been largely

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<sup>148</sup> Carpenter (1978), 242.

<sup>149</sup> *Jewelers’ Weekly* 4:23 (6 Oct. 1887): 3019; cited in Venable, 76.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> Widar Halén, *Christopher Dresser* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1990), 44.

utilized,” while averring that this was done so in a manner in “full harmony with the requirements of American and European civilization...in the hands of American workmen.”<sup>152</sup> Further proof is provided by the complete absence of any mention of Japanese workmen in the volumes of Tiffany & Co.’s clipping files, which date from the 1840s, as well as the absence of any Japanese notations or names on working drawings, which were often riddled with handwritten comments, notes, figures, and calculations.<sup>153</sup> Even Bing, while referencing Tiffany’s showing of Japanesque wares at the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in his *Artistic America*, speaks to the company’s adaptation of design rather than wholesale reproduction, let alone the involvement of Japanese artists: “Although not intrinsically original in concept—their decorative principles were taken directly from the Japanese—their borrowed elements were so ingeniously transposed to serve with new function as to become the equivalent of new discoveries.”<sup>154</sup>

Supplementing the company’s design collection and art library was access to the personal collection of Edward C. Moore, who was trained and worked in the workshop of his father, John C. Moore, in the 1840s. In 1851 the Moore firm signed an exclusive agreement with Tiffany, at which point the father retired, leaving his son in charge.<sup>155</sup> Beginning in the 1860s, Moore’s interest in Rococo Revival designs shifted to an interest in Japanese art, a change which manifested itself not only in his designs but also in the amassing of his own collection of Oriental art, part of a collection of over twelve thousand pieces of art accumulated during his

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<sup>152</sup> Cited in Carpenter (1978), 200.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. From this assessment to the present day, there has been no conclusive evidence found that Tiffany engaged Japanese workmen in any capacity during the 1870s or 1880s, the height of the company’s Japanesque design production.

<sup>154</sup> Cited in Loring, 36.

<sup>155</sup> Venable, 51.

lifetime and bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>156</sup> The collection was given at his death in 1891, thus freezing the assemblage as an accurate reflection of the objects that had guided Tiffany designers from the beginning of their Japonique stylistic phase, the production of which seemed to expire with Moore's death. In fact, just four years after the *Jewelers' Circular* reported that Tiffany had shown "many specimens in the Japanese style" at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, there was little to no evidence of Japonique silver in Tiffany's 1893 Columbian Exposition display.<sup>157</sup>

Moore's collection was dispersed to nineteen different curatorial departments within the Metropolitan Museum of Art, including Asian, Egyptian, European, Costume, Greek and Roman, Modern, American, African and Oceanic, Near Eastern, and Musical Instruments.<sup>158</sup> Of the 1,093 objects held in the Asian art collections, 557 are identified as Japanese art, of which ceramics, baskets, *netsuke*, metalwork, and *inrō* are the largest groups.<sup>159</sup> Of the sixty-three pieces of metalwork, fifty-three are nineteenth century, with only one example from the seventeenth century and nine from the eighteenth century. Thus, although Moore and his designers could have been inspired by imagery from various media, it was mainly contemporary nineteenth-century metalwork that was the source for Tiffany's Japonique creations, rather than a reformulated version from centuries past. Whereas Japanese designers were purportedly not present in Tiffany's design studios, current Japanese metalwork designs were present in their libraries and studios.

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<sup>156</sup> Data is the result of a query of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Collection Database (MMACD) obtained by the author with the assistance of Sinead Kehoe, Curator of Japanese Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, on April 12, 2011. Results for Edward C. Moore queried in the "credit line" field yielded 12,044 results.

<sup>157</sup> Carpenter (1978), 201.

<sup>158</sup> MMACD.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* Japanese objects: 132 ceramics, 126 baskets, 108 *netsukes*, 63 metalworks, 45 *inrōs*, 43 textiles, 28 lacquerwares, 3 works in bamboo, 3 ivories, 2 works made from gourds, 1 *ojime*, 1 *cloisonné*, 1 handscroll and 1 work in wood.



The bulk of Japanese metalwork objects in Moore's collection are bronze, iron, copper and silver vessels, ranging from incense burners and covered boxes to teapots and vases.<sup>160</sup> Tiffany flatware patterns *Japanese* and *Vine*, introduced in 1871 and 1872, reflect the naturalistic grasses, flowers, foliage, and vines with curling tendrils and berries found on a nineteenth-century iron plate with repoussé work and lacquer decoration, as well as a pair of copper plates with mixed-metal decoration in Moore's collections.<sup>161</sup> One of Tiffany's earliest pieces of hollowware in the Japanesque style, a lidded gold-lined silver container listed in Tiffany's records as a "Tea Caddy-Japanese Box," features applied cherry blossom sprigs and spikey branches in a gold-toned finish very much in the same manner as a copper-toned patinated and textured bronze cylindrical incense burner from Moore's collection.<sup>162</sup> The sparseness of the decoration, form and dimensions are nearly the same. One of the most literal translations from a Japanese piece in Moore's collection to a Tiffany work is the transformation of a nineteenth-century cast iron brush pot with relief inlay in silver, gold, and *shibuichi* ("one-fourth" in Japanese), an alloy typically comprised of one part silver and three parts copper that can be patinated in a range of greys and blue-greens, into a cylindrical vase on a footed base.<sup>163</sup> The Japanese brush holder's dark textured cast surface is overlaid with a spider web that begins with closely woven strands at the top of the bamboo-rimmed vase that widen and wrap around the vessel's circumference. A menacing eight-legged spider reigns from the top of its web, eyeing a dragonfly that has become ensnared arachnid prey. Following the same composition, the Tiffany vase's body achieves a more finely textured surface with hand-hammered silver, while the spider

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid. Japanese object types: 15 vases, 8 covered boxes, 7 ornamental works, 7 tobacco pipes, 5 tea/winepots, 4 vessels, 4 plates, 3 brush holders, 2 incense burners, 2 covered pots, 2 cups, 2 spoons, 1 bowl and 1 saucer.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. Accession numbers 91.1.620, 91.1.618 and 91.1.619.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Accession number 91.1.469. The Tiffany tea caddy is marked "No. 19 (2555/3908)" and is owned by The Society of Preservation of Newport County, Rhode Island.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Accession number 91.1.617. Tiffany vase is marked "696/2991."

and dragonfly fashioned from copper, silver, and brass contrast boldly against the shimmering silver undulations.<sup>164</sup> Also in Moore's collection was a nineteenth-century iron brush holder in the same dark textured finish with similar decorations of relief inlay dragonflies, foliage and flowers in silver, gold, and copper.<sup>165</sup>

The Tiffany vase rests on a silver pierced Japanesque diaperwork scroll-footed base derived from Chinese and Japanese carved wood examples; the specific design was first created by Moore in 1871. Moore's Japanese collection included an eighteenth-century Japanese openwork bronze brush pot decorated with phoenixes atop a pierced scroll-footed base, as well as a nineteenth-century bronze vase with a decorative scroll-footed base applied to the vase's solid body, which rests on a functional scroll-footed base.<sup>166</sup> Moore also designed a triangular silver tray with rounded corners, featuring the mixed-metal spider and dragonfly design with the addition of a small copper maple leaf, which was shown by Tiffany at the 1878 *Exposition Universelle*.<sup>167</sup> A nearly one-foot tall bronze nineteenth-century Japanese vase fashioned as three gradated segments of a bamboo branch and decorated with bamboo stems and leaves could very well have been the inspiration for Tiffany's 1877 deeply patinated rusted steel vase in the form of a cylindrical brush pot, decorated with gleaming silver bamboo branches and leaves, paulownia, and geometric cutouts, as well as a "F&BC" monogram rendered as a calligraphic ornament that loops down the vase's exterior.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> For an image see Loring, 28.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. Accession number 91.1.488.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. Accession numbers 91.1.479, 91.1.616. For images see <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search?ft=91.1.479> and <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search?ft=91.1.616>.

<sup>167</sup> Loring, 29.

<sup>168</sup> MMA CD. Accession number 91.1.518. Tiffany vases of this model are owned by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the Dallas Museum of Art (1989.3) and the Samuel J. Wagstaff Collection of American silver (auctioned at Christie's Jan. 20, 1989), marked Tiffany & Co/5045 Makers 114/Sterling Silver/and/other metals/141. Tiffany records note that the body of the vessel was based on Japanese brush holders and is made of rusted steel and another

Also shown at the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* by Tiffany was a patinated lidded copper tea caddy with a pair of silver pike fish, swimming in an aqueous realm of sea grasses and floating seaweed strands.<sup>169</sup> Whereas the fish are relief inlay, the grasses and seaweed are rendered in flat inlay, often referred to as damascene, and known as *kaga zōgan* in Japan. The Moore collection possesses several works with flat inlay work including a nineteenth-century Japanese two-handled vase with mixed-metal floral flat inlay, a nineteenth-century Japanese bronze saucer flat inlaid with a gold geometric-patterned fan and other shapes, and a nineteenth-century Japanese five-tiered bronze incense box with multiple mixed-metal flat inlaid geometric patterns covering its exterior.<sup>170</sup>

In addition to functional vessels and forms, there were also three-dimensional decorative objects including a nineteenth-century Japanese bronze cicada, snail, gourd, and three turtles: one with its head up and tail down, one with its head down and its tail up, and one with its head and tail down.<sup>171</sup> In 1879, Moore designed a hand-hammered silver jardinière depicting a watery lower half, occupied by aquatic arrowhead plants and green and yellow-gold flowers, from which four copper and brass turtles in full relief have emerged.<sup>172</sup> The turtles appear to crawl freely upon the jardinière's surface and were unquestionably cast from Moore's Japanese turtles, the turtle with a raised head and lowered tail being the primary model. All three of Moore's Japanese turtles appear to have served as models for the silver relief inlay turtles exploring the smooth polished copper surface of an 1880 Tiffany three-piece coffee service designed by Moore, replete with silver inlay relief bamboo leaves and three-dimensional silver frog finials.<sup>173</sup>

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version was made in copper; all decorations were based on Japanese sources, cited in Venable, 344. For an image see Venable, fig. 6.47.

<sup>169</sup> For an image see Loring, 27.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. Accession numbers 91.1.483, 91.1.513, 91.1.514.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. Accession numbers 91.1.510, 91.1.481, 91.1.511.

<sup>172</sup> For image see Loring, 54.

<sup>173</sup> For image see Loring, 46.

The use of mixed metals and alloys was quite a departure for American silver companies, initiating a complete break from the traditional silversmithing system of Britain, upon which American practices were founded. It would be a decade after Gorham and Tiffany launched their first Japanesque flatware patterns until the Europeans achieved original Japanesque flatware patterns.<sup>174</sup> Whereas British silversmiths eventually adapted Japanesque patterns, such as Elkington & Company's use of the intricate geometric patterns of Komai of Kyoto, a leading Meiji-era metalworking family known for intricate inlay of gold and silver set into iron, they were not allowed to mix precious and non-precious metals, as their work would not be approved for hallmarking by the Goldsmith's Company, the governing guild of silversmiths since the sixteenth century. As the use of steel, iron, bronze, brass, copper, and alloys thereof was not permitted, the British smiths could only create a simulated version of the rich mixed-metal works using just silver and gold. Thus, for Aesthetic-era creations, American silver looked no more to the British tradition from which the industry hailed, but rather to Japanese sources, both physical and in print. Despite the clear connections between American silver companies and Japanese aesthetics, media, and processes, both American manufacturers and Western critics demonstrated a need to underscore the country's further development of all the praised elements of Japanese design, essentially advocating that American silversmiths had advanced beyond these initial inspirational materials and technologies. On September 21, 1878 at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* a critic from the *London Spectator* wrote of Tiffany's displays: "The articles made in the developed Japanese style were marked by simplicity and boldness....This decoration was rendered more varied and attractive by the use of metallic colours, the natural ones...and the artificial produced by alloys." The report acknowledges that the decoration was "derived from

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<sup>174</sup> Hood, 106.

Japanese art, but has been so developed by Tiffany...that they now possess a greater variety, and in some instances, finer qualities of colour than the Japanese.”<sup>175</sup>

The same *Jewelers' Weekly* journalist who had observed Tiffany's Designing Room in 1878 also noted that the “bright-looking youths working assiduously with paper and pencil” had “access to an extensive art library,” which was also on the premises of the Prince Street factory.<sup>176</sup> The library housed an encyclopedic holding of periodicals and books ranging from classical to contemporary art, volumes on nature and science, titles on design and ornament from all cultures and an abundance of books on Oriental art. The library was well-maintained and ordered, with each volume possessing a “Tiffany & Co. Prince St. Works” bookplate and an identification number. In addition to the company's library, designers also had at their disposal Edward Moore's personal library, mainly volumes of nineteenth-century decorative arts. This too was bequeathed by Moore to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and is now housed in the Museum's Thomas J. Watson Library. Moore's personal library comprised 460 volumes given in 1891 and an additional ninety-eight volumes given by Moore's son, Edward C. Moore, Jr., in 1915.<sup>177</sup> The collection was originally kept together in a dedicated room in the Watson Library, but was integrated with the general collection in 1965.<sup>178</sup> The collection contains books of over fifty subjects from over twenty cultures, ranging from theory and philosophy of ornament and world's fair publication to Indian silks and book illumination.<sup>179</sup> Among the many titles

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<sup>175</sup> Cited in Loring, 26.

<sup>176</sup> *Jewelers' Weekly*, 1887.

<sup>177</sup> Catalogue record sent to the author from “exporter @library.metmuseum.org” on January 12, 2011.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Information obtained by author on April 13, 2011 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Thomas J. Watson Library by reviewing all volumes of photocopied “shelflist card files” which comprise photocopies of each card catalogue record from the original Moore shelflist card files (no longer extant). The card catalogue records are photocopied in the original Museum Library classification call number sequence. The volumes of the Moore Collection cannot be searched and retrieved as a collection online. The volumes of photocopied shelflist card files are the only source of a complete accounting of the individual volumes that formed Moore's personal library collection. Individual online

referencing Eastern art, twelve volumes written by English, French, American, and Japanese authors on Japanese pottery, pigments, pictorial arts, enamels, ornamental arts, and textiles were part of Moore's personal library. Included in the dozen books are works that contained copious amounts of Japanese designs, including *L'art japonais* written in 1983 by Louis Gonse (1846-1921), a French art historian, collector and author of Japanese art, especially as the editor of *Gazette des beaux-arts*; and *The Ornamental Arts of Japan* written by George Ashdown Audsley, an English architect, artist, illustrator, writer, and decorator.<sup>180</sup>

Valued at \$10,000 in 1913, the design libraries at Gorham were no less well equipped to provide designers with ample inspiration.<sup>181</sup> John Gorham recognized the potential of foreign design sources and notes the purchase of books in his diaries during his trips to Europe in 1852 and 1860. An 1871 inventory of Gorham's design room lists over two hundred volumes of mostly foreign titles, as well as a room filled with a multitude of plaster casts, medallions, works from Wedgwood, parian, majolica, plaques, statues, bronzes, electrotypes, and naturalistic elements such as shells.<sup>182</sup> Each volume bears a numbering system instituted by Gorham's librarian and a paper label depicting two putti bearing tools and flanking a banner reading "GORHAM MFG Co SILVERSMITHS," around which metal vessels are scattered. Describing Gorham's design room in 1868 as "having the appearance of a library," a reporter from *Harper's*

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records of volumes in the general catalogue of the Thomas J. Watson Library do not indicate that a volume originated from Edward C. Moore's personal library bequest.

<sup>180</sup> Information regarding volumes on Japanese art in Moore's personal library obtained by author on April 13, 2011 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Thomas J. Watson Library by reviewing all volumes of photocopied "shelflist card files" (see above end note). Japanese art volumes in Moore's personal library, listed sequentially by call number: *The Pictorial Arts of Japan* 1886 (110.81 An21 Q4253), *The Ornamental Arts of Japan* 1883-1884 (110.81 Au22 Q), *L'art Japonaise* 1883 (110.81 G581 QCJ4142-2), *A Glimpse at the Art of Japan* 1876 (110.81 J29 4018), *Japanese Objects of Art* 1917 (110.81 J273 31321), *On Japanese Art, A Discourse Delivered at the Royal Institute of Great Britain* 1863 (110.81 L53 Q4238), *Japanese Pottery* 1880 (143.081 F85 CJ 87481), *Japanese Enamels* 1884 (144.081 B67 CJ4089), *Japanese Textiles* 192-? (156.4 J274 31320), *Art and Art Industries of Japan* 1878 (159.22.AL1 4049), *On Japanese Pigments* 1878 (170.2 T13 28717), *Voyage au Japon* 1823-30 (912.2 3892).

<sup>181</sup> *Gorham Summary Volume*, 1913, 12; cited in Venable, 76.

<sup>182</sup> *Gorham List of Assets*, 1871, 34-44; cited in Venable, 91.

*New Monthly Magazine* wrote about the designers' ability to draw creative stimulus from nearly any design source and cleverly transform the aesthetics into the project at hand:

It is indeed well stored with books, and with illustrated works of the costliest description. All beauty is akin. A designer may get from an arch of the Cologne Cathedral an idea for the handle of a mustard-spoon, and induce the spirit of a gorgeous mosque into the design for a caster....Antique vases, the Elgin Marbles, books of animals, birds, fishes, flowers, trees, portraits, pictures, statuary, architecture, and all other accumulations of grace and beauty, may be useful to those whose business it is to cover with grace and beauty the tables of mankind.<sup>183</sup>

By 2005, when Gorham's design library was gifted to the Rhode Island School of Design Fleet Library, the number of volumes had grown to over seventeen hundred, with thirty-two volumes specifically related to Japanese art.<sup>184</sup> Eighteen of these volumes are from Western authors and sources, and fourteen are from Japanese sources, including collections of drawings by Japanese artists and illustrated narratives published in Japan. The earliest Western publication, *Les Merveilles de l'Exposition Universelle de 1867* by Jules Mesnard, features multiple line drawings of Japanesque metalwork by Emile-Auguste Reiber (1826-1893) for Orfèvrerie Christofle beginning in 1866. Lucien Falize (1839-1897), a second-generation jeweler of the revered jewelry firm known for its Japanesque designs and cloisonné enamels, reporting for the *Gazette des beaux-arts*, called Reiber "the high priest of Japanism," as he was recognized

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<sup>183</sup> *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 32 (September 1868): 443; object file 1991.126.45.25, Decorative Arts and Design Department, Rhode Island School of Design Museum.

<sup>184</sup> Research conducted by author at the Rhode Island School of Design Fleet Library, Special Collections. Accession records held by the Fleet list 1,791 volumes (1,251 titles). By 2005 Gorham had been sold to Lenox, the legal donor of Gorham's design library to the RISD Fleet Library (Gorham was bought by Textron in 1967, Lenox was acquired by Brown-Forman in 1983, Textron sold Gorham to Dansk in 1988, Brown-Forman acquired Dansk and Gorham and incorporated both as part of Lenox, in 2005 Lenox was sold to Department 56, Department 56 went bankrupt and Clarion Capital Partners LLC purchased the assets of Lenox through a bankruptcy auction, thus effectively owning Department 56, Lenox, Dansk and Gorham; Lifetime Brands Ltd. acquired the rights to reproduce a selected number of Gorham's top-selling flatware patterns and giftware). Three of the thirty-two works related to Japanese art in the Gorham Design Library were published in 1895, 1897, and 1903, and are therefore outside the scope of this dissertation.

as a Western leader of promoting a Japanesque style.<sup>185</sup> Not only would John Gorham have seen Reiber's work at the 1867 Paris exposition, along with Japan's own metalwork, Gorham also subscribed to French periodicals such as *Gazette des beaux-arts* and *Revue des arts décoratifs*, whose reporters routinely reviewed works shown at world's fairs and other exhibitions.

A similar volume by George Titus Ferris covering the 1876 Philadelphia world's fair, *Gems of the Centennial Exhibition*, includes a review of the Japanese exhibitions and two line drawing images of the Japanese displays, which feature several of the large-scale bronze incense burners that were shown prominently in the Japanese exhibition in the Main Building. The review of the Japanese displays reflects the conflicted Western state of ardently admiring Japanese art, while holding fast to a position of superiority in the beginning years of the Aesthetic Movement. Ferris notes that Europe and America have only recently recognized that China and Japan "possess schools of Art noteworthy and distinct in themselves," their art previously relegated as "ethnic curiosities," but states that Japanese "imagination is never bound by the rules of science but runs riot in wanton fancies, as if Puck himself had turned artist."<sup>186</sup> The author begrudgingly concedes in the same paragraph that the Japanese "display the finest art of its kind...it never becomes stale or monotonous" and is in "the closet sympathy with nature."<sup>187</sup>

A group of three volumes of *Keramic Art of Japan* written by George Ashdown Audsley, first published in 1875, are rich with Japanese imagery. Gorham owned not one, but two versions of *Keramic*: a large folio-sized two-volume set (1875) and a smaller book (1881) comprising the entire publication. Audsley, one of the foremost and prolific British authorities of Japanese art

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<sup>185</sup> Lucian Falize [M. Josse, pseud.], "Exposition universelles. Les industries d'art au Champ de Mars. I. Orfèverie et bijouterie," *Gazette des beaux-arts* 18 (1878): 217-55; cited in Venable, 175.

<sup>186</sup> George Titus Ferris, *Gems of the Centennial Exhibition* (New York: D. Appleton & company, 1877), 78. Puck is the clever and mischievous sprite in *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, a play by William Shakespeare, who introduces him as a "shrewd and knavish sprite;" he is responsible for wreaking havoc among the play's characters.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*



publications, and his brother William James were both Liverpool architects of churches and public buildings and were known as leaders of the revival of English decorative arts that followed the 1851 London Great Exhibition, along with Owen Jones and Christopher Dresser. Together they published many books on architecture and ornament. In 1875 George Audsley collaborated with his friend James Lord Bowes, a wealthy Japanese art collector and Liverpool merchant, to produce *The Ceramic Art of Japan*. This was one of the first and most important books on Japanese art to be produced in the English language, featuring reproduced engravings, line drawings and chromolithography by Firmin-Didot & Cie, Paris, a renowned French family of printers, publishers, and typographers. Along with images of Japanese ceramic works, numerous pages illustrate a multitude of small-scale geometric Japanese patterns, as well as naturalistic drawings of birds, floral arrangements, swimming carp, and theatrical masks. Of particular note is the trio of Japanese ceramic plates in deep teal blue and white, the largest depicting a ferocious tiger emerging from a densely foliated background in Plate VIII of *Keramic*. In 1881, Gorham produced a hand-hammered and elaborately chased version of the square plate copied directly from the Japanese ceramic model.<sup>188</sup>

In 1883, George Audsley published one of the most extensive and comprehensive treatises of the late-nineteenth century on Japanese art, entitled *The Ornamental Arts of Japan*, of which Gorham owned the four-volume folio-sized edition. In the same vein as *The Ceramic Art of Japan*, the nine chapters covering drawing, painting, engraving, and printing; embroidery; textiles; lacquer; encrusted work; metalwork; cloisonné enamel; modeling and carving; and heraldry, are lavishly illustrated with seventy chromolithographic plates with gilding and numerous drawings, many by Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849).

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<sup>188</sup> The Gorham tray is owned by the Dallas Museum of Art, accession number 1993.10; for an image see Venable, 174.

Gorham also possessed *L'art japonais*, by the French collector of Japanese art, Louis Gonse, as a folio-sized two-volume set and a smaller book comprising both volumes. This heavily illustrated survey of all Japanese art media is filled with drawings by Westerners and Edo-era Japanese artists such as Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) that accompany an introduction and eight chapters on Japanese painting, architecture, sculpture, metalwork, lacquer, textiles, ceramics, and prints. Illustrations include etchings produced chiefly by printmaker and lithographer Henri Guérard, chromolithographs by Coin, Lefèvre and Moine, photogravures by M. Dujardin, and *aquarelles typographiques* by the father-and-son firm of Firmin and Charles Gillot. Published in 1883, *L'art japonais* was a groundbreaking text, providing a basic framework of Japanese art for artists, designers and collectors, as well as cementing a Western canon of Japanese art. Although a Western publication, *L'art* has been called the “first intelligent account of Occidental art,” and it is known that Gonse consulted with Japanese collector, dealer, and artist Hayashi Tadamasa (1853-1906) for the publication. Hayashi arrived in Paris for the 1878 *Exposition Universelle* with the company Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha and remained to collaborate with many leading forces of *Japonisme*, including founder of the Musée Guimet of Asian Art, Émile Guimet, and to compete with the formidable French art dealer Siegfried Bing (1838-1905).<sup>189</sup>

Of particular note in *L'art japonais* are the many photogravure images of Japanese mixed-metal sword fittings, including *tsuba* (handguard fitted between the sword hilt and the blade), handles of *kogatana* (small knives carried in the sword scabbard) known as *kozuka*, and *kogai* (skewer-like knives carried in the sword scabbard).<sup>190</sup> Beginning in the sixteenth century, the

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<sup>189</sup> James Albert Michener, *The Floating World* (Honolulu: The University of Hawai'i Press, 1983), 239.

<sup>190</sup> Joe Earle, *Lethal Elegance: The Art of Samurai Sword Fittings* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2004), 30, 234, 235. Kanzan Satō, *The Japanese Sword: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. Joe Earle (New York: Kodansha International, 1983), 162, 198.

*tsuba* became the most important fitting of a Japanese sword with which to display highly skilled and decorative metalsmithing techniques and materials; the *kozuka* was the second most important.<sup>191</sup> Gonse's images of Japanese sword fittings could have readily served as models for Gorham's c. 1880 line of fruit knives and forks possessing cast bronze handles with silver and gilded decorations of mythological figures, birds, marine life, horses, military furnishings, masks, deer, bulls and flora; and silver blades and tines bright-cut with floral and textiles patterns.<sup>192</sup> Introduced by an unknown designer, the pattern was known as "Number 5" by 1881 and was limited to dessert knives and forks, later expanding to fish forks. An 1879 and an 1880 photograph in the Gorham Company archives depict what are apparently genuine Japanese *kozuka*, which could have also been the design source.<sup>193</sup> In the same vein, the Japanese *menuki*, the pair of gripping elements found under the silk-ribbon handle wrap on either side of the hilt of Japanese swords and knives, were the inspiration for Gorham's *Hizen* flatware, introduced in 1880.<sup>194</sup> Although originally designed to prevent the samurai's hands from slipping on the sword handle, they eventually became a decorative element.<sup>195</sup> Examples of these decorative mixed-metal *menuki* are shown in Plate XVI of *L'art japonais*. Composed of figures, animals, and flowers and foliage, the *menuki* compositions are compacted into a small-scale format easily gripped by a human hand and therefore easily transformed into utensil handles, as seen with the writhing dragons and sinuous sea creatures that wind around the Gorham handles.

The final Western volume related to Japanese art in Gorham's library, *A Brief History of Japanese Bronze* by Edward Greey, published in 1888 with a collection of black and white

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<sup>191</sup> Earle, 18, 30.

<sup>192</sup> Bright cutting is an engraving process by which metal is cut in small gouges at an angle and removed by a tool with a sharp beveled cutting edge, known as a burin, producing a narrow channel with slanting sides that creates a faceted, bright, and sparkling appearance. For further information, see Newman, 49.

<sup>193</sup> The Gorham Manufacturing Company, *Photo Book Silver Flatware 1885* (GMCA), 79. The photographs are code-dated "L" for 1879 and "M" for 1880.

<sup>194</sup> Earle, 29, 235. Satō, 162, 199. For image of Gorham's *Hizen* flatware pattern see Carpenter, 105.

<sup>195</sup> Satō, 162.

photographs, is an interesting and lesser-known book. As a Captain in the British Army, Greey was sent as an attaché to the British Legation in Japan, established by Sir Rutherford Alcock in 1859, where he “studied the customs, art, and literature of that country and its system of government.”<sup>196</sup> In 1868, Greey moved to the United States, settling in New York, where he became a well-known dealer of Japanese and Chinese art, active in local exhibitions and collecting circles of Japanese art.<sup>197</sup> Revealing Greey’s disregard for nineteenth-century Japanese bronzes and metalwork, most of the line drawings of the interior of his gallery and gardens shown in *A Brief History of Japanese Bronze* are furnished with large-scale Buddhist bronzes from the Edo period (1615-1868), and his introduction laments “the degeneration of [Japanese] art since the opening of the treaty ports,” referring to modern bronzes as often cheap “hybrid productions.”<sup>198</sup> Mindful that his livelihood derived mainly from sales of what he labeled as “modern” bronzes, he counters that the demise is due to lack of patronage rather than lack of talent, and includes half a dozen images of modern Japanese bronze sculptures at the end of the book along with five photographs of modern pieces of Japanese metalwork. He reassuringly notes that “Japanese art is not dead, but slumbering with its eyes open. It has only changed to suit the taste of its new customers, and, when it once more experiences the reviving stimulus of native patronage, will—in a new form—be as charming, if not as refined as in the past.”<sup>199</sup>

It would seem that it was the modern bronzes and metalwork that inspired Gorham designers, as evidenced in the similarity between the pair of deep bronze vases with bodies covered in a multitude of relief butterflies, tall necks of shining silver floral collars and silver feet fashioned as tusked elephant heads, whose trunks curve downward to form the vases’ feet from the Greey

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<sup>196</sup> “Suicide of Edward Greey. The Well-Known Dealer in Japanese Ware Shoots Himself,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1888.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> Edward Greey, *A Brief History of Japanese Bronze* (New York: Rogers & Sherwood, 1888), 11-12.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

photographs, and Gorham's series of objects, many made for the 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, including fruit trays, candelabra, centerpieces, all resting on pachyderm supports. The profusion of floral blossoms that cover the entire surface of caddies and incense burners in Greey's photographs of Japanese Meiji-era metalwork are noticeably echoed in Gorham's series of coffee and tea services shown at the 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle* and in the company's Autumn 1888 catalog, which includes a service in the "Oriental East Indian" pattern, a dynamic amalgamation of Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and Persian design, creating an exotic whole known in no country but America.<sup>200</sup>

Of the fourteen volumes in the Gorham design library from Japanese sources, only three bear marks noting the date of their accession: volume ten of Hokusai's *Manga* and a volume of fourteen hand-painted watercolor landscapes, with no further identification beyond two owners' seals, are marked with a Gorham stamp of October 16, 1871; and volume 15 of *Manga* bears a handwritten notation in pencil stating that it entered the collection in 1879.<sup>201</sup> The range of

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<sup>200</sup> Gorham Costing Records, costing slip for "#2000 Tea Set," April, 1888, volume 6, p. 9, Archives of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. A second set was made and completed in August of 1888. This version was less ornate as indicated by the difference of 18 hours of chasing for the kettle alone and the price difference of \$120.00 for the six-piece tea set. *The Gorham Design Library Gorham Annual Catalogs 1880-1909* (Providence: Brown University and The Owl at the Bridge in association with Joseph Merritt & Co. and Newbrook, Inc., 2003), Disk 3, 1886-1890.

<sup>201</sup> The fourteen volumes in the Gorham design library from Japanese sources do not have individual call numbers. Twelve of the Japanese source volumes are housed in one box (Special NE 1325.K3 G67) and the remaining two volumes in another box (Flat Folio NE 13.25.K3 G67). The fourteen volumes in the Gorham design library from Japanese comprise an unidentified volume of hand-painted landscape watercolors (11.75 x 6.75"); an unidentified volume of architectural details (5 x 7.25"); one volume of Utagawa Hiroshige's ten-volume *Ehon Edo miyage* (7 x 4.75"); volume one and two of *Tenmangū godenki ryaku* (8.75 x 6"); two copies of the second volume of *Kachō gaden* by Katsushika Taito II (8.75 x 6"); and seven volumes of Katsushika Hokusai's *Manga* (9 x 6.25"); volumes 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13 and 15. Charles Carpenter states that two more volumes of Japanese art were present in the Gorham design library: an 1873 book of forty-two photographs of album painting of birds and flowers without identification and *Musō kōeki monchō* (Carpenter misspells that title as *Musā Koeki Mohchā*), a volume of *mon* designs and patterns (see page 95). At the time Carpenter was assessing the library, it was still in the possession of and used by the company; it does not appear that these two volumes were included in the shipment delivered to the RISD Fleet Library, for whatever reason. The fourteen Japanese source volumes have small paper stickers with numbers in the 600s or the remainder thereof ranging within 612-637; the two earliest numbers, 612 and 619 are assigned to the volume of hand-painted landscape watercolors and the tenth volume of the *Manga*. The fourteen volumes also bear Dewey Decimal Classification numbers; Gorham appears to have adopted the cataloging system at some point.

Japanese material in the Gorham Design Library is equal to the manner in which the company relied upon it for inspiration. The publications depicting the oldest Japanese material are two volumes of *Tenmangū godenki ryaku* (Abbreviated legends of Tenmangū), which tells the story of Sugawara Michizane (845-903), a Japanese poet, scholar, and statesman, who was falsely accused of wrongdoing by his enemies at court and died in exile.<sup>202</sup> Avenging his death, his spirit tormented his accusers until they restored his appointment of Minister of the Right and ultimately built the Kitano Tenmangū shrine in Kyoto in his honor and designated him a *tenjin*, or heavenly deity.<sup>203</sup> The illustrations in Gorham's *Tenmangū godenki ryaku* volumes from 1851 refer back to older Japanese painting styles used in handscrolls beginning in the twelfth century with the famous *Illustrated Tale of Genji* scrolls (*Genji monogatari emaki*).<sup>204</sup> The oldest extant depiction of the history of the Kitano shrine (*Kitano tenjin emaki engi*) is a handscroll dating to the early thirteenth century. The painting style features strong diagonals and a *fukinuki yatai* ("blown off roof") perspective, where the scene is depicted from an unusual high vantage point. With a few exceptions, the courtiers are shown seated in voluminous robes with abbreviated facial features, including thick eyebrows and tiny mouths, as well as slit-like eyes and noses formed of a single hooked line; this treatment is known as *hikime kagibana*, meaning "a line for the eye, a hook for the nose."<sup>205</sup> This archaizing style has been translated onto the 1871 Gorham kettle and lampstand in the form of the engraved image of a Japanese couple with similar facial features, costumes, and seated composition, as well as the facial features of the standing male figure on the opposing side of the kettle. Above the figures is a series of faux Japanese cursive

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<sup>202</sup> There are six illustrations in each volume in the *Tenmangū godenki ryaku* version owned by Gorham; the first volume of Gorham's copy is missing illustrations 3, 4, and 6; the second volume is complete.

<sup>203</sup> Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), 144-5.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

*hiragana* (syllabary) characters, which is found in Gorham's volume from Utagawa Hiroshige's ten-volume series *Ehon Edo miyage* (Souvenirs of Edo) published between 1850-1867.<sup>206</sup>

The volume of hand-painted watercolor landscapes, *Ehon Edo miyage*, and a small volume featuring architectural elements do not seem to have been direct source material for Gorham. Japanesque wares as scenic or architectural imagery was typically not part of the company's repertoire. Rather, designers relied upon individual elements that, if part of a greater composition, were isolated and typically grouped somewhat randomly on pieces. It is the volumes of Katsushika Hokusai's *Manga* and the second volume of Hokusai's student Katsushika Taito II (active 1810-1853), studies of birds (*kachō-e*) and flowers, entitled *Kachō gaden* (Flower and bird sketches, dated 1849), that were used most frequently, consistently, and directly by Gorham designers.

Hokusai's *Manga* is a fifteen-volume set published between 1814 and 1878; volumes 1-10 were published between 1814-1819, volume 11 was published between 1823-33, volume 12 was published in 1834. The exact publication dates of volumes 13 and 14 are unknown but are believed to be after Hokusai's death in 1849 and by 1878, when volume 15 was first published.<sup>207</sup> These volumes are a compilation of over four thousand illustrations by the artist of myriad subjects: flowers, foliage, trees, landscapes, birds, insects, lizards, mammals, dragons, mythological creatures, ghosts, fantastical grotesques, demons, samurai, architectural elements, buildings, tools, arms; people engaged in industry, chores, entertainment, exercise, leisure, atmospheric conditions; and situations of danger and combat. Many of these images are isolated sketches, sometimes appearing with multiple other similar sketches of the same subject on a

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<sup>206</sup> Volumes 1-4 were published in 1850, it is not known when volumes 5-7 were published, volume 8 was published in 1861, volume 9 was published in 1864 and volume 10 was published in 1867.

<sup>207</sup> It is questionable whether *Manga* volumes that were published posthumously are solely Hokusai's work; they may contain work by Hokusai's students.

page, while other illustrations are presented in a scenic composition spreading across two pages. No volume contains images of a single subject, although some concentrate on related images, but most volumes unsystematically progress from one page to the next, going from samurai warriors engaged in battle and panoramic mountainous landscapes to a group of grazing rabbits and a scene with a dog shown beside a philosopher's rock. *Kachō gaden* is a compilation of *kachō-e*, or bird and flower images, presented much in the same manner as *Manga*, with isolated images of birds and flowers massed on a page and scenes of birds set amid vegetation.

Beginning with Charles H. Carpenter's 1982 *Gorham Silver 1831-1981*, the only comprehensive publication of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, it has been written that six volumes of Hokusai's *Manga* were part of the Gorham Design Library.<sup>208</sup> This same information was repeated in Charles Venable's 1994 *Silver in America*, the most recent comprehensive publication on American silver companies, as well as *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, a catalogue accompanying a major Aesthetic Movement exhibition organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1986, and none of the publications identified which volumes were owned.<sup>209</sup> Closer research has revealed that Gorham owned seven volumes of *Manga*: 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13 and 15.<sup>210</sup> All are noticeably worn, the pages are tattered, spotted, and stained, and some have been rebound. All volumes are bound in the traditional *fukuro toji* style, by which double-wide pages are folded in half individually, stacked and bound by sewing the loose edges opposite the crease together with thread, thus creating a double-wide piece of paper with only two writing surfaces, or a "bound-pocket" page style. This binding style was either not initially understood or ultimately not appreciated by or convenient for the Gorham designers, as many of the pocket pages in the *Manga* volumes have been split apart.

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<sup>208</sup> Carpenter (1982), 95.

<sup>209</sup> Venable, 175; Burke, 268.

<sup>210</sup> Research conducted by the author in 2013 at the RISD Fleet Library.



All volumes, with the exception of volume 15, are bound in their original Asian format, in which reading begins from what Westerners would identify as the end of the book, progressing from the right page to the left. Volume 15, however, has been unbound, all pocket pages have been split in two, and the pages have been rebound out of original order; all original pages are present. Of the fifty-six pages with images in volume 15, forty-six are composed as images that cover two pages by virtue of elements that continue from one page to the next, or as indicated by the page layout registers that match those of the opposing page. The two-page images are a range of landscapes, seascapes, figural groups, animal groups or simply flowers that spread across both pages. Of the twenty-three two-page images, twenty were separated in Gorham's volume when it was rebound, underscoring that Gorham's adoption of Japanese design was realized through a discriminating process rather than a comprehensive appropriation; the designers selectively chose components, rather than feeling obligated to accept wholesale the individual elements, as well as the presentation or greater composition thereof. The disregard for page order and compositional intention also emphasizes that the foremost purpose of the *Manga* volumes, as well as all volumes in the Gorham Design Library, was to serve as design sources, and the sequence, format, narrative, or greater compositional considerations of the images were of little or no importance to the designers. Indeed, there survive in the design library three scrapbooks of images cut from various library volumes that were assembled by Gorham designers as personal compilations of designs.<sup>211</sup> Not surprisingly, some of the library volumes were very rare and

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<sup>211</sup> There are three Gorham designer scrapbooks: two are housed in "Gorham Archival Box B," the first scrapbook has a Gorham call number of "7451," the second scrapbook has no identification; the third scrapbook is housed in a box entitled "US-RPD-sp4.0/Gorham Manufacturing Company Records/1890-2008/Series II: Books/Scrapbook of Illustrations/5." Laurie Whitehill Chong, RISD Fleet Library, Special Collections, related to the author that she has found numerous volumes in the Gorham Design Library that have had images cut out of them, and some that have had images cut out and then taped back in place.

costly, but the value lay not in the publication itself, but rather in its ability to serve as a reference of style and design, to be used at will for new creations, unbound by history or culture.

Gorham's earliest use of use of *Manga*-style imagery begins with the company's 1869 set of four silver bowls that are randomly engraved with insects, flowers, and foliage. This sort of treatment continued through the 1870s with examples such as the engraved silver and gilt butter dishes, salts, and peppers made for the Furber Service.<sup>212</sup> These motifs could have been inspired by any of the *Manga* volumes or the *Kachō gaden* volume in the design library, as well as reproductions of these in Western publications, such as *L'art japonais* or George Ashdown Audsley's Japanese art publications.

By 1879, Gorham designers began to make relief and fully three-dimensional replications of specific *Manga* images, which were produced in silver, copper, and bronze. Positive casting patterns of lead or metal of the chosen motif were made by hand and appliqués were cast via sandcasting or the lost-wax process and then soldered on the hollowware. This style is found on a Gorham four-sided footed hand-hammered silver vase made in 1880 with cast copper appliqués of a fork-plumed bird flying over a grassy mound; two circular medallions of an owl, birds, flowers, and foliage; a long-legged insect, and a large hen with a smaller hen—or possibly chick—beneath her wing and a butterfly floating above.<sup>213</sup> The hens bear a marked similarity to an overlapped rooster and hen surrounded with chicks depicted in volume 15 of *Manga*, where they are one of four framed images of birds on a two-page spread.

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<sup>212</sup> See Chapter III for a discussion of the Furber Service, which is in the collections of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum. The twenty-four butter dishes are accession numbers 1991.126.68.1-.24; for image of the butter dishes, see: [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2323\\_butter\\_dishes\\_set\\_of\\_24](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2323_butter_dishes_set_of_24).

<sup>213</sup> The vase is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number 2008.68; for an image see: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collections/search-the-collections/19748?img=1>. An 1881 Gorham hand-hammered silver bowl with gilded interior and applied three-dimensional copper cherries with silver leaves applied to the rim and side of the bowl also features the single hen, the same bird with forked plumed tail and butterflies.

Similar in composition to the hammered vase, is an earlier vase in Gorham's *Curio* style.<sup>214</sup> With a completion date of October 14, 1879, the four-sided vase features copper appliqué of a swallow; circular medallions of birds, insects and foliage; and a samurai warrior, all of these elements affixed on three sides. An intricately cast, fully three-dimensional brass lizard stealthily endeavors to scale the fourth side of the vase. The design of the samurai warrior with intricately rendered armor, swords and a *naginata* (a tall Japanese pole weapon), was taken directly from the fifteenth volume of Hokusai's *Manga*; the lizard is a three-dimensional version of one depicted in the second volume of *Manga*.<sup>215</sup> The insects and flora within the medallions, as well as the swallow's long-plumed tail, bear a noticeable resemblance to Hokusai's *Manga* examples in volumes thirteen and fifteen, as well as the second volume of *Kachō gaden*.<sup>216</sup>

The discovery of the presence of volume 15 of *Manga* in the Gorham Design Library is important as the most direct figural reproductions of Japanese designs come from this book. As the volume was published posthumously in 1878 and not accessioned into Gorham's library until 1879, this recent Japanese design material may have been a welcomed addition to the first six volumes that arrived beginning seven years prior, and was eagerly employed to create a new dimension in the Gorham's Japanesque design vocabulary.

An active scene from the fifteenth volume of *Manga* depicts eleven robed figures seated within a screened open pavilion with landscaped folding screens and a tatami mat-covered floor. Three figures form a trio on the left page, playing a *shō*, a Japanese musical reed instrument; a

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<sup>214</sup> The vase is owned by the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, accession number 92-17; for an image see: <http://www.nelson-atkins.org/collections/objectview.cfm?Start=1&ret=1&objectid=22035&3cbb0055eb01d99d-B5C2D65D-DFBB-BF50-64D33C6421F4DAB6.>, March 1, 2015.

<sup>215</sup> Although Volume 2 of the *Manga* was not present in Gorham's design library, Hokusai's illustrations were copied and included in Western books about Japanese Art, including *L'art japonais* by Louis Gonse and *The Ornamental Arts of Japan* by George Ashdown Audsley, both included in Gorham's design library.

<sup>216</sup> There is also an unidentified drawing of a medallion featuring a bird encircled by blossoming cherry branches on page 181 (lacquer chapter) of *L'art japonais* by Louis Gonse, which was included in Gorham's library, that is very similar to the style and composition of the medallions on the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art's *Curio* vase.

*fue*, a Japanese bamboo flute; and a *hira-daiko*, a flat drum on an angled stand. Another trio plays a game around rings within a circle with the active participant blindfolded and about to toss a small ring in the lower right of the scene. In the upper right corner, four robed figures huddle around a footed gaming table; an older and a younger male figure are engaged playing *shogi* (Japanese chess), while a woman intently watches the next move and a man reading a book is distracted by the action. The board is accurately rendered, composed of rectangles in a grid of nine rows and columns and the players move the remaining seven ivory wedge-shaped pieces with names written with two *kanji* characters on the board; captured pieces have been placed in a lidded box on the floor. The quartet playing *shogi* was appropriated by Gorham to decorate a circa 1880 tray and while the composition closely resembles Hokusai's, details have been altered or eliminated. The board is reduced to six columns and six rows, only four game pieces remain and the box is absent. The figures' robes remain depicted in great detail, but the Asian eye shapes have been replaced with rounded Western versions. The text in the hand of the distracted man reading has been changed from a running vertical format to faux characters with a more horizontal alignment.<sup>217</sup>

While the placement and groupings of *Manga* motifs on both vases and the tray are harmoniously positioned to create an overall pleasing aesthetic, the individual elements have been plucked from their original settings. The hens have been separated from their chicks and other avian companions, the quartet gathered around the board has been removed from the lively interior filled with fellow players, and the samurai stands alone—yet in the *Manga* composition, he is one of a cast of characters. Below a full moon surrounded by a dark inky sky, the towering samurai clad in armor and a black garment bends from the waist, while scowling and pointing his finger towards a meekly smiling man, who kneels suppliantly on the ground beside a paper

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<sup>217</sup> For images see Carpenter, 96-7.

lantern on a stand. His long robes traverse onto the next page, where a grinning robed male figure raises his hand into the air and seems to conjure something from a tripod vessel on the ground. Above this scene, an elegantly robed female attempts to appease an enormous hairy creature with a human head, who rests his elbows on a diminutive table that crosses back onto the first page.

Although the samurai has clearly been placed within a setting and interacts directly with one of the four other figures from the two-page tableau, this possibly narrative Japanese *mise-en-scène* was not sufficiently embraced, understood, or appreciated by Gorham designers to merit full incorporation into the vessel's design scheme. Rather a bird, lizard, and a pair of floral and bird medallions were chosen as the samurai's companions, possibly indicating that although Gorham designers were interested in the adoption of isolated exotic images, the selection was done with a measure of control, if not autonomy, without succumbing to mimicking the entire Japanese composition. That the vase's samurai and lizard are nearly the same size and the tray's bird easily larger than the four figures may signify that Gorham designers were intrigued by the disproportionate sizes of Hokusai's designs, such as that of what the designers most likely assumed was a female figure standing on a carp four times her size. However, the figure is not a woman; it is Fish-basket (Gyoran) Kannon, a figure who would be recognizable to the Japanese as a Buddhist deity. Other *Manga* designs feature a robed monkey the size of the female figure standing next to him, and three men seeking refuge from the rain under a plant with single leaves large enough to amply cover them amply. Although the *Manga* illustrations depicted figures and objects known to and understood by the Japanese, to Western eyes they displayed the inventive results of taking artistic liberties, which in turn produced equally innovative responses in the Gorham studio. The Gorham designers also demonstrated a keen awareness of and sensitivity to

their Western market by the selection of particular Hokusai imagery that provided the right amount of exoticism, while respecting the sensibilities of their audiences. The *Manga* volumes contain many images depicting subjects that would be distasteful, puzzling, or incomprehensible as decoration for high-end silver wares. Imagery of male and female bathers, barely clad wrestlers and gymnasts, and Japanese demons, ghosts, mythological characters, and the like were filtered from Gorham's lexicon of Japanesque ornamentations, as well as that of Tiffany and other American silver firms. Tempered enough to pass in proper society, yet capable of fomenting thoughts of mysterious, foreign lands, nineteenth-century American silver challenged that which was socially acceptable with generous inclusions of alluring exoticism. Comfortable choices were naturalistic elements of land and sea with a few figural inclusions. Gorham, more than any American firm, braved possible client disapproval with the presence of Japanese people engaged in Japanese activities, but the examples are sparse and the practice began to wane by the early 1880s, when a new, more fully developed style of Japanesque design emerged at the company.

An 1880 silver Gorham coffee pot in an Islamic form with mixed metal *Manga* figures and a winged dragon for a handle provides a transitional example for study.<sup>218</sup> Two robed itinerant monks figures wearing *sugegasa*, traditional conical woven straw hats, and carrying a box filled with *ofuda* (prayers, charms, and other kinds of religious texts and images for the laity), are shown at the bottom of the pot, their hats and heads bent to the right suggesting that they are shielding themselves from the elements.<sup>219</sup> The monk on the left has knelt on the ground and opened one-half of the lidded box; its contents are swept into the air by the wind. The

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<sup>218</sup> For image, see Carpenter, 100.

<sup>219</sup> The author thanks Dr. Evgeny Steiner (Professional Research Associate, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; member of the Research Forum, Courtauld Institute of Art, London; and Principal Research Fellow of the Russian Institute for Cultural Research, Moscow) for his expert assessment of the Hokusai figural scene shown in the fifteenth volume of the *Manga* and Gorham's coffeepot.

kneeling monk looks up with an open-mouthed expression of alarm and regret towards the other figure who stands, holding his hat, looking away from the box with an expression of admonishment. This figural scene is taken directly from the fifteenth volume of the *Manga* titled “Kaze” (wind), and although little has been changed save a slight simplification of details, Gorham designers have included diagonal lines on the body of the hand-hammered silver vessel suggesting a driving rain, the direction of which is consistent with figures’ tipped heads and the trajectory of the airborne papers. Whereas the atmospheric condition of wind is suggested in Hokusai’s scene, there is no rain depicted above the men; in fact, this page is divided into two registers: the lower two-thirds framing the figural scene and the upper third depicting a leafy plant and a suspended wreath decorated with floral sprays. There are, however, many instances of weather-related conditions depicted in Hokusai’s *Manga*, including snow, wind, rain, and storms at sea. With regard to allusions of rain, Hokusai depicts four instances of a gentle downward rain and ten instances of driving rain, suggested by diagonal dashes, in the seven *Manga* volumes in the Gorham Design Library. Thus, having ready examples within the volumes at hand, this coffee pot is a rare example of the designers depicting a cohesive scene that covers the entirety of the vessel, as well as a combination of a figural group with not only a background setting differing from the source, but also one that successfully portrays an active climatic condition.

The coffee pot’s form was known as “Turkish” in the company’s costing records and was a popular form through the 1880s, yet Turkish coffee is historically brewed in a small open pot with a long handle called a *cezve*. Gorham’s pots reflect the style of Persian or Islamic coffee pots with bulbous lower bodies that taper upward to a slender neck with a domed lid, the handle

dramatically looping from near the base to the top, finished with an elegant swan-neck spout.<sup>220</sup> Gorham's combination of a Near-Eastern form with Japanese decorations displays a current of the Aesthetic Movement known as American Orientalism, a style reflected in the work of artists of diverse media. American Orientalism, following the French Orientalist style, was a Western construct of the "Orient," a nebulous geographical location including Moorish, Indian, Islamic, Near Eastern, and Persian lands. As defined in Edward Said's landmark 1978 publication, *Orientalism*, the creation of the "Orient" allowed westerners to admire that which they found beautiful, sensuous, and exotic, while concomitantly maintaining a perceived moralistic and intellectual supremacy over "Orientals" and their realms.

Launching into a new phase of Aesthetic Movement designs, the 1880 coffee pot is symbolic of the designers' maturing style that demonstrates a confidence in not only mixing elements from a Japanese design source, but also in manipulating artists' original scenes to create altered versions, in addition to applying these transformed decorative components to a form derived from yet another culture. Gorham's independent adaptive approach was acknowledged by a report for *The Magazine Art* in an article entitled "American Silver Work": "Of late years the influence of Eastern art, especially that of Japan, has been very apparent in Western design, and this has perhaps been more particularly so in America. It can be traced very distinctly in many of the Gorham Company's patterns, but there is nothing slavish in the ready adoption of an idea."<sup>221</sup>

The final phase of Gorham's adaptation of Hokusai *Manga* imagery is found in a series of silver hollowware formed of intricate *repoussé*-worked patterns of roiling waves, fish and other sea creatures. One of, if not the, most famous Hokusai images is an ukiyo-e print published

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<sup>220</sup> An example of this type of Gorham coffee pot is in the collections of the Rhode Island School of Design Museum, accession number 84.161; for image, see: [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2507\\_coffeepot](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2507_coffeepot).

<sup>221</sup> A. St. Johnston, "American Silver Work," *Magazine of Art* 9 (1886), p. 16; cited in Burke, 268-71.



sometime between 1830 and 1832, known as *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (*Kanagawa oki name ura*), or more simply, *The Great Wave*, from the artist's series *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*. Enormous azure waves ending in frothy white hooks stacked upon one another punish three small boats in the turbulent swells, while the majestic Mount Fuji is diminutivized in the background, as well as repeated in one of the foreground waves. The distinctive claw-like waves are found often in *Manga*, including a total of seventeen pages in the volumes owned by Gorham. Made from the early to mid-1880s, tureens, punch bowls, lamps, and pitchers bear waves irrefutably modeled on those of Hokusai, but the three-dimensionally-realized compositions are credited solely to Gorham designers. An 1882 silver pitcher twists with swirling pike and carp, swimming in churning waves that crest at the vessel's neck, which is gripped by a taunting dragon with its tongue unfurled onto the rim and its back legs clutching the base, forming the handle.<sup>222</sup> A silver lidded tureen and a tureen with stand dated 1884 continue the dynamism of *The Great Wave*, featuring carp with long curved barbels that literally jump from the water, as indicated by the rings created around their bodies as they penetrate the sea's surface.<sup>223</sup> The lidded tureen appears to visually gyrate with the strong diagonals of the waves that encompass its circular form, while the tureen with stand virtually spins out of control as the high-relief fish leap and dive into the waves, nearly missing the crabs and lobsters also caught in the rolling waters. Finally, an 1885 punch bowl takes the series to its apex with a marine scene that seemingly swells and sloshes, as its liquid contents would when served with the matching ladle with a gilded shell-shaped bowl. On one side, a golden-eyed carp splays its fins to clear the

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<sup>222</sup> The pitcher is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number 2013.26. For an image, see: <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/21586>.

<sup>223</sup> The lidded tureen is in the collections of the Rhode Island School of Design, accession number 81.072; for an image see: [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2535\\_tureen](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2535_tureen). The tureen with stand is in the collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, accession number 2005.9a-c; for an image see: [http://museum.dma.org:9090/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/search\\$0040/0?t:state:flow=7b31e053-8ccb-4fcb-a667-e7d792c5d9aa](http://museum.dma.org:9090/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/search$0040/0?t:state:flow=7b31e053-8ccb-4fcb-a667-e7d792c5d9aa).

swirling whitecaps, and on the other side an undulating dragon with gold eyes and tongue rides the waves beneath the undulating rim populated with crabs, fish, and shells.<sup>224</sup>

The hand-hammered and chased Hokusai-style waves on this collection of wares is accompanied by incredibly realistic cast elements such as the handles formed as coral branches and the finial formed as a sea urchin on the lidded tureen, the handles formed as crabs and the finial formed as a lobster on the tureen and stand, or the handles formed as shells on the punch bowl and its ladle formed of scallop shells. American critics and journalists of the decorative arts identified the Japanese affinity for the natural world as one of the country's most significant artistic attributions, as noted in an 1878 article entitled "The Influence of Oriental and Particularly of Japanese Art on the Present Modes of Ornamentation" by the *Jewelers' Circular Weekly*: "One important point in Japanese ornamentation is the careful though subtle reproduction of nature. A celebrated painter in Paris used to tell his students that...to know how to paint was not of the greatest importance, but that what was required to be an artist was to know how to see. There lies the whole secret, and the Japanese seem to 'know how to see' better than any other school of decorators."<sup>225</sup>

What was seen and appreciated as the naturalistic character of Japanese art was embraced and promoted by American silver companies to the point where the source need not arrive from another hemisphere, but could be found in the company's local environs. For Gorham, that was Rhode Island, also known as the "Ocean State." What would have seemed ignoble, hackneyed, and unimaginative had ultimately become novel, innovative and heartily admired. From ornamentation decorating hollowware vessels, the casts—often taken from live examples—

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<sup>224</sup> The punch bowl and ladle are in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accession number 1980.383; for an image see: <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/punch-bowl-set-with-ladle-41179>.

<sup>225</sup> "The Influence of Oriental and Particularly of Japanese Art on the Present Mode of Ornamentation." *Jewelers' Circular Weekly* 9:4 (May 1878): 65-66; cited in Venable, 190-1.

became the elements that formed the object themselves. In 1884, Gorham launched a line of silver and gilded flatware and smallwares in the *Narragansett* pattern, the name originating from the Native American tribe that was once part of the Algonquin family, which occupied the coasts of Rhode Island, and is eponymous with the state's Atlantic inlet on the north side of the Rhode Island Sound, known as Narragansett Bay. Looking as if they were plucked from the nearby bay, an example of *Narragansett* salad servers are encrusted with shells, sand, crabs, and strands of seaweed tangled with fish.<sup>226</sup> The servers, as well as all of the wares in the pattern, are fully finished on the front and back, convincingly achieving the appearance of utensils naturally formed below the sea. The concentric undulating rings of the oyster shell-shaped serving end of the spoon appear to be awash with the receding tide that has deposited a tiny shell and grains of sand into the spoon's gilded bowl.

Having almost as powerful an impact as Japanese imagery on American silver companies' revelatory stylistic shift, were the alloys, coloring, and patination of metals developed by Japanese metalworkers over the centuries. The arrival of Buddhism in Japan from the Korean peninsula in the sixth century brought images cast in bronze, and by the eighth century very large-scale sculptures were being fashioned from *karakane*, which was made by alloying copper with a low-melting white metal such as tin, zinc, or lead.<sup>227</sup> Typically, tin and lead were used. Although most bronzes were small in scale and cast in one piece, large works were often cast in situ from multiple parts, soldered together with an alloy of tin and lead.<sup>228</sup> These Buddhist bronze

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<sup>226</sup> The salad server set is in the collections of the Rhode Island School of Design collections, accession number 84.060.1-.2; for images see: [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2532\\_narragansett\\_salad\\_set](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2532_narragansett_salad_set) and [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2533\\_narragansett\\_salad\\_set](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2533_narragansett_salad_set).

<sup>227</sup> Richard Hughes and Michael Rowe, *The Colouring, Bronzing and Patination of Metals* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1991), 11, 349. Eitoku Sugimori, *Japanese Patinas* (Portland: Brymorgen Press, 2004), 73-4. *Karakane* is a leaded tin bronze with a variable composition of 71-89% copper, 2-8% tin, and 5-15% lead; the addition of antimony and arsenic is typical.

<sup>228</sup> Hughes, 11.

works were often gilded by means of mercury gilding, a process brought to Japan from China.<sup>229</sup> Although based on the metallurgy of China and Korea, the Japanese development and employment of non-ferrous copper-based alloys was unequalled, particularly during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>230</sup> The country's unusual practice of casting their copper ingots by pouring molten copper into wooden molds covered with canvas sacks submerged in boiling water may have been the impetus to later development of non-ferrous metal coloring and patination. Although the metallurgical objective for this particular procedure of casting ingots is unknown, the process had the unexpected effect of imparting a red oxide coloring to the metal that was extremely durable and impervious to tarnish.<sup>231</sup>

From this early metal coloring process, the Japanese developed and produced a spectrum of color from precious and non-precious metals, such as gold, copper, and silver, through the formulation of alternative alloys which were then patinated using oxidation and pickling solutions. The rise of Zen Buddhism and the increasing importance of the military class at the end of the fifteenth century propelled metalworking skills to the forefront, calling for the production of temple objects and elaborate sword furniture. The sword guards called *tsuba* became a favorite object on which to lavish the most elaborate of metalworking skills, and the peaceful years of the sixteenth century that followed a period of prolonged feudal contention allowed for artistic consideration of these ostensibly functional objects, originally forged in simple forms from iron. Basic inlays of copper and brass gave way to intricate designs of non-ferrous alloys that were patinated and combined to create a wide range of exquisite contrasting colors. Japanese metalworkers developed over seventy specialty alloys, but among the most important were *shakudō*, a mixture of mostly copper and up to 5% gold to create a shimmering

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

purple-black hue when pickled; *shibuichi*, a mixture of copper and silver, 60-70% copper and 30-40% silver, to create a range of colors from olive brown to light gray; *kuromi-dō*, a mixture of mostly copper with 1% arsenic to create a dark brown to black appearance after pickling; and *sentoku*, a yellow bronze composed of copper, tin, zinc, and lead that produces a chrome yellow patination after pickling.<sup>232</sup>

Whereas other cultures may have been using some of these techniques, it is the combination of myriad alloys and coloring processes that distinguishes the superiority of Japanese metalworking practices and technologies.<sup>233</sup> Underscoring the pervasive significance and application of advanced metallurgy, even everyday coinage was a medium with which to showcase these skills. Made from a gold-silver alloy, coins were treated with a paste of iron and copper sulphates, potassium nitrate, calcined sodium chloride, and resin; they were then heated over charcoal to red-hot, immersed in a solution of sodium chloride and washed and dried to reveal a pure gold finish.<sup>234</sup> A practice unique to Japanese metallurgy is the use of *rokusho*, a coloring agent composed of copper acetate, calcium carbonate, and sodium hydroxide; and a paste made from a long white radish, commonly referred to a *daikon* radish, and also known as *mooli*.<sup>235</sup> Metal articles are first subjected to a surface preparation of a paste made from ground *mooli* and water, which was applied multiple times.<sup>236</sup> Although the result of the *mooli* paste process is not fully understood, it appears to prevent tarnishing and uneven coloring and may activate the surface of the metal. Next, the metal articles were plunged into a boiling solution of *rokusho*, and often copper sulphate, which makes gold more yellow, silver more white, copper a

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 12-13, 349.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Hughes, 350; Sugimori, 7.

<sup>236</sup> Hughes, 350.

brilliant orange to orange-brown to reddish brown, and brass an orange-brown tone.<sup>237</sup> The addition of vinegar made from alum or the Japanese pickled plum (*umeboshi*) increases the red tones of the metals.<sup>238</sup>

The impressive, brilliantly-hued metals soon made their way into American creations, which were compared to metallic paintings by 1879: “The introduction of a new metal or alloy susceptible of assuming almost any color give to the silversmith a palette only less varied than belongs to the painter and makes it possible to emulate not only the forms of nature in this class of decoration, but the many hues as well.”<sup>239</sup> In addition to appliqués of bronze, copper, brass, silver, gold, and alloys inspired by Japanese wares, American silver firms began experimenting with patinated and oxidized surfaces, as well as textured surfaces with hammer marks achieved through both chasing and traditionally hammered metalwork. Gorham introduced a line of copper wares in 1881 that featured bodies in a range of color tones, including a red lacquer-like patina, and metal appliqués, many of which had been oxidized. The company’s exact copper patination processes remain unknown but were most likely achieved through heating the copper to produce a thin film of red-brown cuprous oxide on the surface, which was then polished to a lustrous glaze; or by treatments with formulae of copper sulfate, copper nitrate, barium sulfide, arsenic, iron oxide, and ammonium sulfide.<sup>240</sup> The “Turkish” coffee pots were often finished with a rich, deep reddish-brown glossy patina, often referred to as Gorham’s “red copper” line. A reporter for the *Jewelers’ Circular and Horological Review* described the line in 1882:

“Copper predominates, and is very popular...the colors are dark warm reds of finest polish,

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid. *Rokusho*, also called copper rust, is not a patina solution, but rather a coloring agent; it consists of copper acetate, calcium carbonate, and sodium hydroxide.

<sup>238</sup> Hughes, 350; Sugimori, 29.

<sup>239</sup> Edwin C. Taylor, “Metal Work of All Ages,” *National Repository* 6 (Nov: 1879), 393-405, cited in Venable, 185.

<sup>240</sup> Carpenter (1982), 114. Herbert Maryon, *Metalwork and Enameling* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 264-5. One of the principle oxides of copper, copper oxide or cuprous oxide is the red-colored solid inorganic compound with the formula Cu<sub>2</sub>O.

mellowing into yellowish browns; scales and shadings...wine tinted....The little square tray, in warmest red tints, has the highest polish.”<sup>241</sup>

The use of copper for vessels was quite a departure for Gorham, who wrote in their 1882 autumn catalog that the introduction of the copper line “was greeted by the Trade with the most hearty sense of appreciation” and so “the variety originally confined to a few specific articles has been increased...until we are now enabled to offer a list of sufficient moment to constitute a distinct department of our business.”<sup>242</sup> Despite the line’s success, the company, concerned that copper might not be the most becoming metal choice for a silver company, admonished that “the dealer unaided by actual inspection and misled by the term Copper would doubtless fail to comprehend the real beauty and true merits of these goods” and assured that the “skill displayed by the designer in producing the varied tones of color has given to them an indescribable charm.”

Along with the colored metals found on *tsuba*, Japanese metalsmiths also created textured backgrounds to enhance the surface-applied mounts on the sword guards. One of the most popular textures was *nanako*, meaning fish roe, a series of raised dots produced by a cupped punch introduced by the Gotō, a samurai family of Japanese metalworkers, who favored applying this texture to a *shakudō* ground.<sup>243</sup> The twenty-four butter dishes from the Furber Service are small studies of Japanese texturing patterns such as *neko-gaki* (cat scratches), *amida yasurime* (radiating lines), *tsuchime* (hammer marks), *shigure yasuri* (vertical file marks emulating falling rain), *yasuri* (fine vertical file marks) and *ishime ji* (rough surface tooled with a punch resembling stone).<sup>244</sup> Although the use of an allover decorative hammered ground on vessels was not typically found on Japanese works, American silver companies were inspired by

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<sup>241</sup> Cited in Carpenter (1982), 113.

<sup>242</sup> *The Gorham Design Library Gorham Annual Catalogs 1880-1909*, Disk 2, 1880-1885.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 109; Hughes, 13. See Earle, 78-9.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.* For image of butter dishes, see: [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2323\\_butter\\_dishes\\_set\\_of\\_24](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2323_butter_dishes_set_of_24).

the Japanese textures as a contrasting decorative ground on which to apply mixed metal ornamentation.<sup>245</sup>

An unidentified Tiffany silversmith, who worked for both Tiffany and Gorham, is credited as the first to use hammered surfaces on American silver wares, as evidenced by a diary that he kept from 1876 to 1883, now in the Gorham Archive.<sup>246</sup> Thought to be the principal assistant to Tiffany's chief designer, Edward C. Moore, the worker wrote on October 13, 1876 that "a very fine ground effect is produced by finishing the article first and then peening [*sic*] it (not planishing) in regular courses and then chasing devices in the rough surface, smoothing the chased parts. The effect has a remarkably fine appearance."<sup>247</sup> In anticipation of the 1878 Tiffany showing at the Paris *Exposition Universelle*, a December 7, 1877 entry states, "Hammered work has proved a success; at present the coarse hammering is the favorite style as it is asserted that it looks as if left so, from the silversmiths' hand in raising the work." Tiffany's hammered wares brought the company the *grand prix* award in Paris, where the *Gazette des beaux arts* exclaimed that "he [Tiffany] has retouched silver surfaces with light, but regular strokes, imitating contours with the die-hammer....The result is exceedingly pleasing to the eye, while the beholder is not afraid to put his fingers on the polished surface, no longer hard and cold."<sup>248</sup>

Although Gorham did not show at the 1878 *Exposition*, they were close on the heels of Tiffany in their creations of hammered works, which were introduced in 1877. While Tiffany's hammering procedures were administered uniformly across the body of a ware and systematized with detailed design drawings dictating the both the size and type of hammer marks, Gorham's designers were given free rein. Working drawings allowed for gradated marks of differing sizes,

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Carpenter (1982), 108, 276. It is thought that the silversmith may have been employed at Gorham by 1883.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 108. Peening is the process of working a metal's surface by mechanical means such as hammer blow, planishing is a metalworking technique that involves finishing the surface by finely shaping and smoothing.

<sup>248</sup> Falize, 231-33, cited in Venable, 181.



types, and processes, creating lively expressive surfaces. In addition to the hammered copper wares, Gorham created silver and gilded hammered surfaces on flatware and hollowware, such as an 1882 oxidized silver loving cup with the carp and Hokusai wave motif at the base and a neck hammered into an irregularly patterned sky. A silver ice cream slice is fashioned with a bowl seemingly lashed onto a silver bamboo handle with large rounded hammer marks that decrease in size as they radiate outward, creating the effect of shagreen's natural modeling. An 1881 five-piece tea and coffee service cleverly uses a hammered finish in imitation of cracked ice that has split apart at various points to reveal Japanese decorative motifs, flowers, and geometric patterns.

A popular Gorham line of hammered silver hollowware—often open bowl forms decorated with multi-hued fruits with gilded interiors and insect appliqués—successfully combined emulations of Japanese textures, mixed metals and color patinations, as laudatorily described by the *Jewelers' Circular*:

A magnificent punch bowl defies pen description. The base is copper, wrought into a branch of a pear tree gnarled and twisted. Another branch also of copper, droops gracefully from the edge of the brim over the outside, with exquisitely carved and burnished leaves, and three natural-sized pears of gold green with a tint of red; one is lightly specked. Over the other side of the bowl droops a bough of cherries, natural size, deepest red, one or two apparently worm eaten and in some of the dark veined leaves insects seem to have left signs of depredation.<sup>249</sup>

In addition to a highly advanced system of metal coloring and texturing, Japanese metalworkers developed an innovative labor-intensive metalworking process, known as *mokume-gane*, which produced mixed-metal works of an incomparable appearance, exclusive to Japan. Originating from the traditional Japanese technique of forming sword blades, this seventeenth-

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<sup>249</sup> Cited in Carpenter (1982), 113. For an image of this type of Gorham's work see Venable, 188 and Carpenter, 115 and Plate IV.

century mixed-metal metallurgy process and type was employed for sword fittings, where it developed not only as a functional component, but also as a highly aesthetic element of metalworking. In order for traditional Japanese sword blades to be razor sharp and strong, while remaining light and flexible, steels of varying hardnesses were combined, using a harder tempered metal for the front of the blade and a softer metal for the back of the blade.<sup>250</sup> Japanese swords are divided by the *shinogi*, a ridge that runs the length of the blade on both sides.<sup>251</sup> The *shinogiji* is the area between the *shinogi* and the *mune*, or the untempered back edge of the blade; the *ji* is the area between the *shinogi* and the *ha*, or the tempered front edge of the blade.<sup>252</sup> As the *ha* was tempered, an outline of the border between the tempered *ha* and the rest of the blade, known as the *hamon*, literally “blade pattern” in Japanese, formed four main types of patterns resembling wood grains, the *ji*.<sup>253</sup> Comparable in appearance to burl wood grain, the pattern known as *mokume-gane* is Japanese for “wood eye” or “wood-grain metal.”<sup>254</sup>

The first attempt to imitate this patterned effect for decorative purposes using non-ferrous metals is attributed to Denbei Shōami (1651-1728), a metalsmith of sword furniture and fittings, working for the *daimyō* of the Akita prefecture.<sup>255</sup> Denbei was given permission to use the name Shōami by the Shōami family, who had wielded significant impact on Japanese sword production since the fifteenth century.<sup>256</sup> The various Shōami schools, which began in Kyoto, were recognized as leaders in the development of branches of workshops throughout Japan to supply the *daimyō*, feudal lords under the power of the shoguns, with legally regulated weapons

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<sup>250</sup> Satō, 13. For diagrams of features of the Japanese sword see Satō, 15-23.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 15-16, 200.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 15-16, 197-200.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 15-16, 197-198.

<sup>254</sup> Gregory Irvine, *The Japanese Sword: The Soul of the Samurai* (Connecticut: Weatherhill, Inc., 2000), 123.

<sup>255</sup> Ian Ferguson, *Mokume Gane* (London: A&C Black Publishers, Ltd., 2002), 14-15.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. Earle, 34. Satō, 159.

as they made the long trek from the country to the capital, while adhering to the *sankin kōtai* (alternate attendance) system that required them to live in Edo for one year out of every two.<sup>257</sup>

As the effect with ferrous metals occurred naturally, Denbei searched for a method to deliberately form patterns with non-ferrous metals. Looking to the lacquer technique known as *guri*, by which alternating layers of red and black lacquer are carved to expose the bands of color, Denbei used alternating layers of different metals that were fused together in a billet, or small ingot of metal.<sup>258</sup> The varying layers of metal were exposed by filing, gouging, carving or forging irregularities into the ingot. As the billet was hammered into a thin sheet, the wood grain pattern emerged. By varying the metal type and alloy formulations and manipulating the deformation and hammering processes, myriad color palettes, patterns, and sheens could be created. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Denbei's innovation was the domain of the sword fitters, who applied the decorative element to *tsuba*, or sword guards.

Japanese artists provided Americans with their first encounter of *mokume-gane* at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia.<sup>259</sup> Demonstrating their fascination with and admiration for the Japanese use of mixed metals, Tiffany & Company and the Gorham Manufacturing Company, experimented with and eventually perfected the production of *mokume-gane* works. The introduction of Japanese *mokume-gane* offered the designers of Tiffany and Gorham a completely new dimension of color in metalwork, and each vied to apply the technique in the most innovative and creative manner that would appeal to their customers. American understanding of these metallurgy processes did not derive from Japanese instruction of any kind, nor did either firm employ Japanese metalworkers.<sup>260</sup> Rather, the American

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<sup>257</sup> Earle, 13, 34. Satō, 159.

<sup>258</sup> Ferguson, 15.

<sup>259</sup> Venable, 179.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

companies conducted trials until the process was understood and then began to adapt *mokume-gane* in non-traditional ways to create hybrid types of this mixed-metal alloy technique.

It is not surprising that nineteenth-century American silver companies determined to work out procedures on their own accord, considering a history that included such metalsmiths as Isaac Babbitt (1799-1862), owner of Babbitt and Crossman, a rural artisan shop in Taunton, Massachusetts.<sup>261</sup> Babbitt and his partner William Crossman struggled to sell successfully their pewterware in a market flooded by English Britannia metal, a pewter-type alloy favored for its silvery appearance and smooth surface.<sup>262</sup> Babbitt experimented repeatedly with alloys until, in 1824, he succeeded in the development of a composition of 92 percent tin, 6 percent antimony, and 2 percent copper. In 1833 his partner Crossman patented a process of spinning their Britannia metal, and by 1834 the company was transformed into Reed and Barton, one of the largest American silverplate and silver companies.<sup>263</sup> In the same manner, Elkington & Co. of Birmingham, England that had secured the patent in 1840 for plating silver by means of electroplating, had successfully licensed its patent to the French firm Orfèvrerie Christofle, but had no such luck in America. Instead, American silversmiths and metalworkers, including Thomas Shaw at Gorham, conducted countless experiments and effectively executed the process themselves.<sup>264</sup>

Edward C. Moore of Tiffany is credited as the first American silversmith to master the process and Tiffany is said to have successfully reproduced *mokume-gane* by 1877.<sup>265</sup> Tiffany's

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. English Britannia metal should not be confused with Britannia silver, an alloy of silver containing 95.84% silver, as opposed to sterling silver containing 92.5% silver.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 14. Spinning is a process of shaping a hollow metal vessel by which a flat piece of metal is held firmly over a wooden form of the desired shape, known as a chuck, that is rotating on a lathe; the metal is worked upward from the base of the chuck to the top edge, conforming to the shape of the chuck. For further information, see Newman, 295-6.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 179.

display at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1878 in Paris boasted numerous pieces of metalwork incorporating decorative *mokume-gane* elements, such as Japanesque water pitchers and vases with *mokume-gane* gourds composed of swirls of colorful alloys. Tiffany's most stunning and important piece at the exposition was its *Conglomerate Vase*, which figured significantly in their receipt of the *grand prix* award for silverware.<sup>266</sup> This tour de force of metalwork included three asymmetrical bands of concentric, ovoid panels of *mokume-gane* in gradated hues of golden red on each side of the vase's neck. Teeming with naturalistic Japanese motifs, the vase is adorned with seedpods, gourds, butterflies, dragonflies, vines, flowers, paulownia—the most popular motif on Japanese crests—and inlaid copper and *niello* Japanese maple leaves. Both European and Japanese critics alike hailed Tiffany's and Moore's success, as evidenced by Lucien Falize of the *Gazette des beaux-arts*: "He [Tiffany] has...above all mastered the secret alloys. He has imitated to perfection *mokonwi* [mokume]...This is a new departure."<sup>267</sup> Also laudatory were the comments of Richard C. McCormick, U.S. Commissioner to the 1878 Exposition, in the July 1879 *North American Review*: "The specimens of work made of the new metal formed by the lamination of all the noble metals and their alloys astonished even the Japanese...many articles having been purchased by them; their chief commissioner having bought one of the principal specimens for his Government."<sup>268</sup>

So skilled were Tiffany's reproductions of *mokume-gane* that some questioned the absence of Japanese participation in their production. The French author Emile Bergerat registered his skepticism in *Les chefs-d'oeuvres d'art à l'Exposition Universelle 1878*: "Certain motifs seem to me such extraordinary imitations of the Japanese manner that I am struck by a doubt as to their originality. Can it be that Tiffany does not employ Japanese workers in New-

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<sup>266</sup> The Tiffany *Conglomerate Vase* is privately owned; for image see Loring, 50.

<sup>267</sup> Falize, 353.

<sup>268</sup> Loring, 33.

York?”<sup>269</sup> Although there were examples of Japanese *mokume-gane* in Edward C. Moore’s collection, such as a nineteenth-century bronze pot for tea or wine, as previously mentioned, Tiffany did not employ any Japanese metalworkers.<sup>270</sup> The first known published reference in English of *mokume-gane* appears in George Audsley’s *Ornamental Arts of Japan* published in 1883, where the author describes “the peculiar class of ornamental metalwork called by the Japanese *mokube* [*mokume*] in which a reddish copper is associated with *syakfdo* [*shakudō*] either in thin alternating lamina or in a fashion which produces a marbled effect.”<sup>271</sup> Even nineteenth-century technical manuals and lectures on *mokume-gane*, such as W. Chandler Roberts-Austen’s *The Colours of Metals and Alloys: A Lecture*, presented in Birmingham in 1886 and published in 1887, post-dated Tiffany’s accomplishments in the technique. Tiffany asserted in the Paris 1880 *Revue des arts décoratifs* that “as early as 1877, we had obtained Moka-Meia [*sic*], after costly experiments.”<sup>272</sup> More so than the French, the Japanese were willing to give due credit to Tiffany for their triumphs, as documented by a Japanese newspaper article in 1879: “They have very beautiful works of our *Mokume* metal which is, I am told, the fruit of their hard study and work of many years.”<sup>273</sup> By the early 1880s, Tiffany was creating pieces composed completely from *mokume-gane*, such as an 1880 mantle clock, comprising forty panels formed from five different *mokume* pattern types.<sup>274</sup>

Although Gorham’s proficiency of *mokume-gane* production is less clearly documented than Tiffany’s, records in Gorham’s 1877 “Technical Manual of descriptions of processes and

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>270</sup> The pot for wine or tea is in the Edward C. Moore Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession number 91.1.475 (MMACD).

<sup>271</sup> George Ashdown Audsley, *The Ornamental Arts of Japan* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1883-84), section VI, 20.

<sup>272</sup> Venable, 179.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid, 172. This quote is taken from an unidentified Japanese newspaper clipping ca. 1879 found in Tiffany Scrapbooks, v. 3A.

<sup>274</sup> For image see Loring, 177.

metallurgy” indicate that they were able to produce Japanese *mokume-gane* and specialty alloys as early as 1877.<sup>275</sup> Notations in a margin of the *Technical Manual*, thought to be made by a former Tiffany employee, reference and describe a piece of Tiffany *mokume-gane* made in August 1878: “Remember copper vase made for Paris order—the solder was full of holes and these were filled with plugs of brass (encrusted) and silver (fine) which, when finished, instead of repulsive, on the contrary, rendered the effect more beautiful than had been sought for.” Whereas this appears to be referencing a Tiffany’s *mokume-gane* work, the process described more closely explains elements of Gorham’s *mokume-gane* process.

Unlike Tiffany, Gorham apparently did not aspire to duplicate the Japanese *mokume-gane* technique, but rather endeavored to reinvent the method as a process unique to the company. Instead of laminating sheets of metal together to be manipulated into a pattern, Gorham’s designers devised a process by which thin fragments of various metals were randomly scattered onto sheets of silver, which were then heated to soften and semi-fuse the metals. Next, the sheets were rolled or shaped to bond the metal fragments with the silver sheets, which were then formed into specific shapes. Once finished, the object’s surface could be polished smooth or left somewhat rough, creating a textured finish. Gorham applied the decorative process to a flatware line and very small body of hollowware known as the *Curio* pattern, which was introduced in May 1879, according to the company’s costing ledger.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> The “Technical Manual of descriptions of processes and metallurgy,” 1877-78, Providence, Rhode Island, is an unpublished manual that contains information on processes used at Gorham and marginal comments on various processes used at Tiffany & Co. in the late 1870s. Comments on Tiffany’s work derived from former Tiffany employees hired by Gorham. Samuel J. Hough, noted Gorham expert, believes Frederic A. Jordan to be the author of the marginalia. The volume survives in the Gorham Archives, John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island (I. Historical, 13.Technical).

<sup>276</sup> There has been great confusion with regard to the correct name of this pattern, as Carpenter mistakenly wrote that the pattern was named *Cairo* on page 104. However, there exist in the Gorham Archives five photographs of a total of nine pieces of the pattern with labels clearly reading *Curio* with a code date “L” for 1879. Noel Turner had also written the incorrect pattern name in *American Silver Flatware 1837-1910* (San Diego: A. S. Barnes, 1972) on pages 96 and 364.

Gorham used their *mokume-gane* process for the handles of the *Curio* flatware pattern. It has been suggested that for the flatware, the silver handle blanks may have had variably sized particles of copper and gold sprinkled over them and were then subjected to the great force of a drop press. Similar to the traditional *mokume-gane* process, the metals were fused physically, rather than by means of a chemical process to create metal alloys.<sup>277</sup> *Curio* was not a full-line pattern; Gorham's costing ledger lists thirty-one pieces of *Curio* that were offered with only five place pieces and twenty-four being serving pieces.<sup>278</sup> Similar to Gorham's *Japanese* flatware pattern, the bowls of the spoons and labels are engraved with Japanesque designs, and all handles feature cast appliqué Japanesque decorations, including cranes, birds, bamboo, flowers, foliage, and geometric patterns. The costing records reveal the expense associated with producing this complicated and labor-intensive pattern; by 1880 the pattern was absent from the company's catalogs.<sup>279</sup>

Five known examples of *Curio* hollowware are a pair of pepper casters, a bell, a single vase, and a pair of vases. They all possess a date stamp of 1879 and are also respectively marked "A94," "B6," "B11," and "B13," which indicates that they were special work orders, one-of-a-kind pieces or limited production pieces. From 1878-1881, Gorham coded special orders with a letter and number combination of A-F and 1-100 for each letter. Opposing sides of the four-sided pyramidal-shaped pepper casters are formed from Gorham's *mokume-gane*, and the other polished sides are decorated with Japanesque copper appliqués.<sup>280</sup> One side of the "B6" bell's body is Gorham's *mokume-gane*; the other side is polished silver, the rim is silver, and the

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<sup>277</sup> Ferguson, 24-5.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> *The Gorham Design Library Gorham Annual Catalogs 1880-1909*, Disk 2, 1880-1885. An article in *Silver Magazine* (Sept./Oct. 2002, p. 27) relates the story of a collector who, after aggressively seeking the pattern for over ten years, was able to obtain only eight different piece types of the thirty-one originally offered by Gorham.

<sup>280</sup> This pair of Gorham pepper casters are also marked "Ex," which may indicate that they were considered "experimental," and were auctioned by Christie's New York, January 18-19, 2007, *Important American Furniture, Folk Art, Silver, Prints and Decoys*, Lot 171.



copper handle is formed as a branch with silver leaves.<sup>281</sup> All three vases have polished bulbous silver fluted bases and long narrow necks, featuring an accent of Gorham's *mokume-gane*. The fluted base of the "B11" single vase is spiral-fluted, there is a band of *mokume-gane* at the base of the neck contained between silver rope borders, and a Japanesque silver floral appliqué ascends the polished silver neck.<sup>282</sup> One of the pair of the "B13" vases has a free-form band of *mokume-gane* midway on the otherwise polished silver neck, a copper band at the neck's base decorated with silver Japanesque floral appliqués, and a silver rope that wraps around the copper band and extends to and overlaps the vase's rim.<sup>283</sup> The second vase of the "B13" pair has a *mokume-gane* neck and a copper band at the base of the neck with Japanesque silver foliage appliqués. One of the rarest pieces of Gorham's *mokume-gane*, the previously mentioned 1879 Gorham vase decorated with the samurai warrior from the fifteenth volume of Hokusai's *Manga*, was made for Bailey, Banks and Biddle, a Philadelphia retailing firm, underscoring the degree to which the 1876 Centennial Exhibition's display of Japanese *mokume-gane* impacted the local market. The vase is marked "B66" and the costing record indicates that it was completed on October 14, 1879 at a net cost of \$93.50 and required forty-six hours of labor.<sup>284</sup> The vase skillfully mixes copper and brass fragments on a silver ground and is the only known extant example of hollowware with a body made completely from this unusual pebbled material. The vase's smooth silver neck, banded at its base with a ring of gilded silver, effectively balances the lively, mottled metal surface achieved by Gorham's distinctive grainy surface, which was not

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<sup>281</sup> This Gorham bell was auctioned by Christie's New York, January 17, 2008, *Important American Silver*, Lot 120.

<sup>282</sup> This Gorham vase was retailed by J. E. Caldwell & Co. of Philadelphia, and was auctioned by Sotheby's-New York, October 28, 2004, *The Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Walter M. Jeffords*, Lot: 203.

<sup>283</sup> This Gorham vase was auctioned by Christie's New York, January 17, 2008, *Important American Silver*, Lot 119.

<sup>284</sup> The Gorham Manufacturing Company, *Costing Book*, volume 34, p. 78 (GMCA). The costing list indicates that another example of the B66 vase was made for stock.

polished to the point of complete smoothness. The fissures between the partially fused metals create a textural complexity absent in the traditional *mokume-gane* process.

For several decades of the nineteenth century, the mania for all things Japanese profoundly engulfed European and American artistic production, especially the field of decorative arts that prized the wares valued by the Japanese—ceramics, lacquerware and metalwork—more so than the woodblock prints so popular with artists. Describing the inevitable impact of Japanese art on the West, Siegfried Bing waxed lyrical in *Le Japon artistique* in 1888: “This art in the end was bound to mix with ours. It is like a drop of blood which has mixed with our blood, that no power on earth can ever eliminate.”<sup>285</sup> The beauty of Japanese mixed-metalwork encouraged imitative reproductions in America yet, more significantly, the ingenuity of traditional Japanese processes inspired the silversmiths of Tiffany and Gorham to develop a uniquely American realization of these technically challenging and aesthetically striking processes.

### **Chapter III: Stylistic Fusion: Gorham Japanesque Silver at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum**

Measuring five and three-eighths inches long, cast of sterling silver with a chased handle in the shape of a harpoon and bowl formed as a whale swimming in waves, a diminutive spoon acquired by the Rhode Island School of Design Museum in 1909 established what would become the largest collection of works made by the Gorham Manufacturing Company in the world. Given by Mrs. Hope Brown Russell, an early benefactor of the RISD Museum, the spoon was the first of the 4,525 Gorham works now owned by the RISD Museum, comprising silver,

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<sup>285</sup> Siegfried Bing, “Le Programme,” *Le Japon Artistique*, vol. 1 (May 1888), 2.

metalwork, furniture, jewelry, medals, bronze sculptures, design drawings, and watercolors.<sup>286</sup>

From the initial accession, the collection grew steadily during the next approximately eighty years to reach over 125 objects. That number increased twenty-fold in 1991 when Textron, a Rhode Island industrial conglomerate that had acquired Gorham in 1967 and sold it to Dansk International Designs in 1989, bequeathed the company's collection of more than two-thousand objects to the RISD Museum. The next major Gorham acquisition came in 2005 when Lenox, the American porcelain producer founded in 1899 with whom Gorham and Dansk had been merged, gifted more than two hundred medals and other metalwork, as well as over two thousand design drawings, ranging from pencil sketches to full-scale presentation drawings rendered in gouache and pastels.<sup>287</sup>

Of the many Gorham objects in the RISD Museum's collections, two acquisitions in particular visually reveal the trajectory of Japanesque design as it initially transformed silver production in America and ultimately facilitated the entry of an amalgamation of Eastern design sources to permeate silver designs, forms, techniques, and ornamentation. The first, the Furber Service, comprises hundreds of dining, serving, and decorative pieces made between 1870-1880, which until 1878 reflects the prevailing Renaissance Revival High Victorian style. Yet with the expansion of the Aesthetic Movement after the ground-breaking impact of Japan's display at the

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<sup>286</sup> By RISD Museum database classification designation: architectural and design works on paper (2,561), boxes (1), coins (1), costume accessories (5), drawings and watercolors (5), furniture (3), glass (2), jewelry (2), lighting devices (18), medals (34), metalwork (1,883), photography (7), sculpture (7), tools (1), toys (1). Hope Brown Ives Russell (1839-1909) was the daughter of Anne Allen Door Ives (1810-1884), who was the daughter of Sullivan Door, one of the principal China Trade merchants in Providence and wife of Moses Brown Ives, who was the son of Thomas Poynton Ives, a business associate and the son-in-law of Nicholas Brown (1729-1791), one of the four Brown brothers of Providence.

<sup>287</sup> In 1991, Brown Forman Corporation bought Dansk, which included the Gorham operations, and combined it with its Lenox division, which it had bought from Kirk-Steiff in 1990. In 2005, Brown Forman sold Lenox to Department 56

and the company was renamed the Lenox Group. Prior to filing Chapter 11 bankruptcy in November 2008, the Lenox Group sold the Gorham, Whiting, Durgin and Kirk-Steiff brands to Lifetime Brands, which also owns the International, Towle, Wallace and Tuttle sterling silver brands.

1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, the aesthetics of the Furber Service categorically shifted to reflect the fervor for Japanesque style. By the end of the service's completion, it emerged as a physical bifurcated compendium of America's adherence to the traditional classicism and its newfound embrace of Japanese design, prompting the near complete eshewal of myriad historicized designs prevalent during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century. In addition, the Furber Service aptly illustrates the complex social customs and fashionable trends surrounding the act of dining and the plethora of implements necessary to dine in style.

The second, a tea service made by Gorham in 1886, unreservedly mixes stylistic elements from multiple Eastern cultural origins within each of the six pieces that form the service. Just six years after the Furber Service was completed, the company's silver designers gained confidence in casting off the theory of creating an object within the stringent confines of a distinct design mode and boldly employed motifs from around the globe within a single object, signifying that American silver designers no longer heeded past or present European design strictures. The world's design motifs were on display and the Gorham Manufacturing Company chose to enfold them abundantly and freely into their creations, which represented the broadest aesthetic parameters known to American silversmiths of the era. The Japanesque style that formed the foundation of the American Aesthetic Movement was infused with other motifs—all continued to be looked upon as exotic—and the “other” that was Japan became the stylistic root from which additional “others” grew. Contained within inanimate objects carefully selected by the lady of the house, such as the Gorham tea service, this controlled international integration was considered appropriate for the nineteenth-century American home and deemed stylistically acceptable for the domestic domain, especially in the form of wares for the occasion of afternoon tea—a female-gendered ritual laden with Eastern connections.

The Furber Service and the tea service represent differing yet synergistic pinnacles of achievement for the Gorham Manufacturing Company during an era of prolific production of silver in America. In the same vein as prehistoric ages named for the prevalent development and use of a particular type of metal, this time was referred to as the “Silver Age” in an eponymously entitled article published in *Scribner’s Monthly* in 1874. This seventeen-page essay on the state of American silver production and its effects claims that “The Silver Age...is an immensely advanced stage of development in art and taste,” and asserts that “her [silver’s] charms, requiring higher art to develop and finer taste to appreciate, than the obtrusive splendors of gold, have begun to command due attention only at a very modern date.”<sup>288</sup> Speaking specifically of America, the author avers that the country “demands a higher grade of design and workmanship than European silversmiths ordinarily have to concern themselves with. The development of American taste and fastidiousness in silver ware has been very marked in an incredibly short time, and presents results which have no counterpart elsewhere.”<sup>289</sup> Further narrowing the focus, the essay hails Gorham as “the greatest manufactory on the globe” and unrivaled in any country or in any age.”<sup>290</sup> Indeed “the little shop of Jabez Gorham, in Providence, was the acorn from which grew the main trunk of the manufacture, and the date of 1831 may be set as the era of our Silver Age.”<sup>291</sup> Referring to the establishment of Gorham, the author presciently foresees that “there is no hazard in saying that the Gorham Company and the brilliant cluster of artists it includes, have made this a memorable decade to the future historian of art.”<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> William C. Conant, “The Silver Age,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, vol. IX, no. 2 (December 1874): 193, 195.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 204, 202

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

## The Gorham Furber Service: From Historicized Revivalism to Japanese Aestheticism

Eminent epicurean and gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826) wrote in his renowned publication *La Physiologie du goût* (The Physiology of Taste), in continuous print since 1825, that “the pleasure of the table belongs to all ages, to all conditions, to all countries, and to all areas; it mingles with all other pleasures, and remains at last to console us for their departure.”<sup>293</sup> Inspired by Greek, Roman, Italian, Egyptian, English, French, American, and Japanese design, the silver on the dining table at the home of New York and Chicago businessman Henry Jewett Furber (1840-1916) spoke to both Eastern and Western countries and cultures. Famed French chef and author Urbain Dubois wrote specifically in *Cuisine artistique* of the rising importance of elaborate dining customs and extravagant accompanying dining services: “The Americans, those robust gourmets who, newly arrived in the arena, have nevertheless made remarkable progress, in cooking as well as gastronomy. But the luxuries of the table in that country of voracious appetites have assumed such extraordinary proportions as to make one involuntarily think of the famous excess of the feast of Ancient Rome.”<sup>294</sup> Fashioned to serve twenty-four guests and stored in twenty custom-fit oak and walnut cases, the 740 pieces comprising the service were commissioned and purchased by Furber from the Gorham Manufacturing Company from 1870 to 1880, spanning a very pivotal time in the stylistic development of American silver and an exacting refinement of the country’s dining practices.

Growing up in the small village of Rochester, New Hampshire as a tenth-generation New Englander and son of a farmer, Henry Furber began life with little indication that he would

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<sup>293</sup> Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *La Physiologie du goût*, 1825 (Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 2011), VII.

<sup>294</sup> Urbain Dubouisin, *Cuisine artistique*, 1886; cited in Harvey A. Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 17.

become a successful entrepreneur and owner of one of the country's largest silver services in the nineteenth century.<sup>295</sup> During his junior year at Bowdoin College in 1860, Furber decided to take a job as the superintendent of the public school system in Green Bay, Wisconsin.<sup>296</sup> Family tradition claims that Furber arrived with fifty cents in his pocket and no living arrangements, prompting his decision to knock on the door of Green Bay postmaster and lawyer Alexander J. Irwin in search of a place to stay. Rather than offering lodging suggestions, Irwin welcomed Furber into his home, shared with his wife and five daughters.<sup>297</sup> Two years later, Furber passed the Wisconsin State Bar exams, joined one of the city's leading attorneys to form a partnership, and married Irwin's daughter Elvira, whose initials "EIF" would soon grace each piece of the Furber Service.<sup>298</sup> During this time, Furber also developed an interest in the insurance business, the catalyst by which the young lawyer would make his fortune.

Furber joined the Metropolitan Fire Insurance Company of Green Bay in 1865 as a special agent, quickly moving up the ladder to serve as General Manager at the company's headquarters in Chicago and then as Vice President in New York, where he took the position of Vice President of the Universal Life Insurance Company in 1867.<sup>299</sup> Furber's continuous business successes allowed for the purchase of the two inaugural pieces of the service, a chafing dish stand decorated with trefoil leaves, vines, and flowering foliage, and an oval tray with

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<sup>295</sup> Phyllis Meras, "The 17 Trunks of Silver Came Back to R.I.," *The Rhode Islander* (July 19, 1959), 12. The largest contemporary service known was the 1,250 piece service made for Marie Louise and John W. Mackay by Tiffany (Venable, 127).

<sup>296</sup> Ibid. Terry Heller, "A Sketch of the Lives of Henry Jewett Furber, Sr. and Jr." from the *Sarah Orne Jewett Text Project* (<http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/unc/tame-indians/furber-fam.html>), June 2008, revised December 2013, with assistance from Gretchen Furber; online article cites as source: Frederic Clarke Jewett, *History and Genealogy of the Jewetts of America* (New York: The Grafton Press, 1908). Furber subsequently received his degree from Bowdoin College.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. "Sued for Four Millions. The Universal Life Insurance Company's Troubles," *New York Times*, July 18, 1877.. The article refers to "Furber's contract with the Universal of May 1, 1867, by which he was to devote himself to the service of the company for nine years.."

bright-cut scrolling vines and festoons.<sup>300</sup> The next year would bring the first substantial purchase of the Furber Service, a monumental silver and gilt two-foot tall epergne (elaborate centerpiece), an epitome of the Renaissance Revival style advanced at Gorham by Thomas J. Pairpoint (1847-1902), who designed the epergne as well as several other significant works in the service.<sup>301</sup> Working in London for the firm of Lambert & Rawlings, the French-trained designer was most likely hired by John Gorham during his third European trip in 1867; Pairpoint began work at Gorham as a designer in 1868.<sup>302</sup>

The Furbers traveled extensively in Europe. Henry was known to be especially partial to Italian Renaissance design, as evidenced by his purchase of a weighty seventeen-pound kidney-shaped tray, measuring thirty-two by nineteen inches, of silver and gilt with a mirrored center. Furber bought the tray, made by Gorham in 1874, at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition as noted in J. S. Ingram's *The Centennial Exhibition Described and Illustrated*, where the tray is also illustrated. Ingram relates the purchase of the "massive silver salver with elegant fretwork...one of the finest specimens of *repoussé* chasing ever executed in this country and valued at \$3,000...by a New York gentleman."<sup>303</sup> Known as the *Cellini Salver*, named after the renowned sixteenth-century Mannerist sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571) of Florence, the work is rimmed by bound fasces, an ancient Roman symbol of magisterial power and strength in unity, and decorated with classical putti representing the arts.<sup>304</sup>

Just as Mannerism originated as a reaction to traditional classicism in favor of compositional tension and elaborate forms, Pairpoint's Renaissance Revival style was a

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<sup>300</sup> Silver tray accession no. 1991.126.60, chafing dish stand accession no. 1991.126.61.

<sup>301</sup> Epergne accession no. 1991.129.29; for image see Carpenter, fig. 58.

<sup>302</sup> Venable, 27.

<sup>303</sup> J. S. Ingram, *The Centennial Exposition, Described and Illustrated, Being a Concise and Graphic Description of This Grand Enterprise, 1876* (Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1976), 309. Also mentioned and illustrated is an 1874-75 pitcher decorated with an allegorical relief of Venus lighting the torches of the Loves from the Furber Service on p. 307, 311; accession no. 1991.126.55.

<sup>304</sup> *Cellini Salver* accession no. 1991.126.44, dated 1874; for image see Carpenter, fig. 56.



combination of classical motifs and the exuberant High Victorian style, a flamboyant and sometimes exaggerated design popularized in England in the mid-nineteenth century and subsequently adapted with marked vigor in America in the 1870s. Aptly characterizing Pairpoint's use of historicized styles infused with robust and high-spirited American dynamism, the Furber Service epergne rests on four silver fluted splayed legs terminating in scrolls, which support a boldly flaired gallery with pierced lancet ends and grotesque bearded male masks. Encircled midway by a floral garland on which two seated putti play a gilded horn and Pan pipes, a conical support swells upward from the gallery, to lift four expansive gilded trays and five candle branches with glass bobeches high above the dining table.

In the same year, Furber also purchased an intricately wrought pair of nut or fruit bowls, each measuring a foot and a half in length and decorated with the Roman goddess of the harvest, Ceres, as well as foxes and grapes derived from *Aesop's Fables* of ancient Greece. Wrought one each in silver and gold, the Furber bowls resemble an ancient Russian drinking vessel known as a *kovsh*, which is typically fashioned in the form of a floating duck and produced in pairs, one silver and one gold. During feasts and weddings, dark mead was drunk from golden scoops, and light mead from the silver scoops. Eighteen seventy-one was the same year that Gorham moved from its original New York City wholesale showroom on Maiden Lane in lower Manhattan, opened in 1859, uptown to No. 1 Bond Street.<sup>305</sup> Presently, the earliest extant invoices for Furber service purchases date to December of 1874. Whereas the pair of bowls and epergne were purchased in advance of the first 1874 invoice, it is not known whether Furber commissioned the

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<sup>305</sup> Venable, 44. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat, *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 375. Pair of fruit or nut bowls accession no. 1991.126.25-.26 (for image: [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2262\\_fruit\\_bowl](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2262_fruit_bowl) and [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2261\\_fruit\\_bowl](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2261_fruit_bowl)); epergne accession no. 1991.126.29.1, .2a-d, .3a-e. (for image see Carpenter, 72, fig. 58).

three pieces in 1871, or purchased them sometime between 1871 and 1874.<sup>306</sup> However, Gorham's records indicate that the pair of fruit bowls were the only examples produced, each costing \$427 wholesale and each requiring three hundred hours of labor, thus suggesting that the pair was most likely a commission from Furber.<sup>307</sup>

A reason for the initial service orders comprising a group of elaborate and decorative wares for the table is a change in dining customs in America. Prior to and shortly after the Civil War (1861-65), refined meals were served à la Français, by which serving dishes were placed directly on the table by servants. The hostess served the soup, the host carved the meat, and diners would serve themselves from the dishes. Dining à la Russe was introduced to France in 1811 by the Russian ambassador to Napoleon, Prince Aleksandr Borosovich Kurakin. This style, popularized in Europe by the 1860s and adopted in America in the 1870s, called for the creation of new serving vessels to fill the Victorian dining room with splendor. Rather than encountering a table laden with a bounteous display of appetizing dishes, diners seated themselves at a table where flowers and exotic fruits, often displayed in elaborate centerpieces or epergnes, had replaced any trace of food. A late nineteenth-century photograph of the dining room belonging to Chicago's dry goods mogul, Potter Palmer, depicts an elegant table set in the à la Russe style, bedecked with tulips and fruits held in various silver containers and blossoming forth from multi-tiered candelabra. Each course, of which there may have been as many as fifteen, was served by waiters to guests one at a time; any preparation, such as carving meat, was completed by servants in the kitchen.<sup>308</sup> Often the numerous serving vessels' decorations related to the type of food

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<sup>306</sup> File II, Furber Collection, Historical-Museum, The Gorham Manufacturing Company Archives (GMCA), The John Hay Library, Brown University.

<sup>307</sup> GMCA, MS.74, Gorham Manufacturing Company, Costing Ledger, Silver Holloware, No. 2, 1866-1873, fruit bowl 775.

<sup>308</sup> John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 135.

contained within. The 1874 *Scribner's Monthly* article discusses the “symbolical works of art that hint the special purpose of every vessel and utensil they adorn,” but contends that a comprehensive study “must be passed over without notice, or this description will stretch out into next month.”<sup>309</sup>

Standing twenty-six inches tall, the *Neptune Epergne* is the grandest piece of the Furber Service and exemplifies in majestic form the trend that arrived with dining à la Russe for showy centerpieces overflowing with fruits and flowers to adorn the table. The *Neptune Epergne*, designed by Pairpoint in 1872, continues the interest in Renaissance Revival design with a strong infusion of High Victorian style.<sup>310</sup> The epergne is crowned by Columbia, the symbol of America, who holds a gilded garland aloft with the assistance of two putti; Neptune, the Roman god of the oceans, who created and gave the horse to mankind, appears below her on the central plaque. In addition to classical motifs, the epergne also evidences the foundation of American silversmithing on British traditions for its form is a type of centerpiece that derives from an eighteenth-century British form. The word *epergne* comes from the French verb “to save.” The idea was that the centerpiece would be placed on the table during the dessert service and diners would help themselves to the trays and baskets filled with sweets, candied fruits and nuts, passing them around the table, thus “saving” the labor of the servants. Concern for the servants was most likely less a priority than a novel sort of dining custom to impress guests with this elaborate silver centerpiece.

Until 1873, Gorham sold exclusively to the wholesale trade, including Tiffany & Co., which had been the company’s primary New York retail outlet, as well as Howard & Co. and

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<sup>309</sup> Conant (1874) 207.

<sup>310</sup> *Neptune Epergne* accession no. 1991.126.80; for image see [http://risdmuseum.org/notes/90\\_neptune\\_epergne](http://risdmuseum.org/notes/90_neptune_epergne).

Starr & Marcus.<sup>311</sup> In fact, the 1874 *Scribner's Monthly* article mentions Tiffany only once, recalling that they had not previously acted as a “manufacturing corporation for the supply of their own retail salesrooms,” noting that “there has been hardly a dealer of importance in America who has not depended chiefly on the Gorham Company for first-class silver ware.”<sup>312</sup> In 1873 Tiffany ceased retailing Gorham silver, Gorham opened a retail showroom at its No. 1 Bond location in the Waltham Building in New York, where they had been conducting wholesale operations since 1871, and Henry Jewett Furber’s orders increased exponentially. From 1873-1875, Furber purchased more than forty-five significant pieces of sterling silver hollowware, including a twelve-piece tea and coffee service, five cruet sets, tureens, sauce boats, platters, trays, baskets, wine coolers, vases, cups, compotes, and an ice bowl.<sup>313</sup> There were also orders for hundreds of pieces of flatware and serving utensils, ranging from fish forks and pastry knives to sardine tongs and grape scissors.<sup>314</sup>

Gorham called on the Furbers in 1876 to request the loan of the *Neptune Epergne* and other pieces from the service to be displayed in their showroom at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The Furbers were apparently pleased to showcase their possessions and allow Gorham to promote the firm’s talents, as indicated by the earlier display of the epergne by the Cincinnati firm, William Wilson McGrew, who retailed Gorham silver, at the 1873 Cincinnati Industrial Exposition.<sup>315</sup> Presumably for the epergne’s display at the Philadelphia Exhibition, Furber commissioned the massive three-part mirrored plateau, measuring over six feet in length,

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<sup>311</sup> Venable, 44.

<sup>312</sup> Conant, 201.

<sup>313</sup> Furber Service invoices, File II, Furber Collection, GMCA.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> “The Useful and the Beautiful at the Cincinnati Exposition. Silver and Jewelry,” *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, September 26, 1873, n.p.; Report of the General Committee of the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition, held in Cincinnati under the auspices of the Board of Trade, Ohio Mechanics’ Institute and Chamber of Commerce from September 3rd to October 4th, 1873, Cincinnati: General Committee of the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition, 1873, 186; cited in Amy Miller Dehan, *Cincinnati Silver: 1788-1940* (Cincinnati: The Cincinnati Art Museum, 2014). The author wishes to thank Ms. Dehan for sharing this information.

the only addition to the service that year along with two silver pitchers. The silver and gilt plateau is decorated with a reduced replica of the Parthenon Freize, featuring horsemen participating in a Panathenaic procession, part of the festival celebrated each year on the occasion of Athena's birthday.<sup>316</sup>

Published at the height of the first campaign of Furber's Gorham silver commission, Scribner & Co.'s *The Silver Age* included a fictitious account of an excessively sumptuous dinner given by a wealthy New York couple which bears an extraordinary similarity to the Furbers and their service. Although neither the Furbers nor their service is mentioned in particular, the silver wares are credited to Gorham. Indeed, two pieces from the actual Furber Service, the *Cellini Salver* and a sizeable silver and gilt pitcher decorated with an allegorical relief of Venus lighting the torches of the Loves, are illustrated in the essay, as well as an Egyptian Revival wine decanter set and an imposing vase with figural scenes that are very similar to the Furber models.<sup>317</sup> The number to be served on a generously proportioned table, which is "twelve yards long and two yards wide" that is "filled closely enough for good effect with 'jewelry in silver' from Gorham's," happens to be twenty-four, and the table's center is commanded by "a magnificent silver *epergne*...heaped and overhung with a great cone of the richest flowers...which rests on four massive feet, as if floated on a silver sea, or more literally a burnished 'plateau'...that mirrors back the beauty."<sup>318</sup> The essay contains a particularly detailed verbal illustration of what could certainly be the fantastical pair of Furber nut and fruit dishes with ladle-shaped bowls that seemingly glide on lithe tendrils of ivy with small clusters of grapes. At the fictitious table, guests partake of fruits and nuts presented from "a sort of fairy

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<sup>316</sup> Plateau accession no. 1991.126.79.1-3, for image of center plateau section see [http://risdmuseum.org/notes/90\\_neptune\\_epergne](http://risdmuseum.org/notes/90_neptune_epergne), accessed March 2, 2015.

<sup>317</sup> *Cellini Salver* illustrated on p. 198, pitcher illustrated on p. 200 (accession no. 1991.26.52), wine decanter set illustrated on p. 207 (accession no. 1991.26.38.1-4), vase illustrated on p. 209 (accession no. 1991.126.55).

<sup>318</sup> Conant (1874), 206.

barge...where grapes are piled within and dangle over the sides,...where a baffled fox clings falling from his leap at the high clusters.”<sup>319</sup>

Continuing the visualization of the opulent scene, the essay describes the “millionaires, ambassadors, generals, admirals, authors, and the President of the United States” being “marshalled to their places...to admire the display...the indescribable beauty of the new style of tureens.”<sup>320</sup> As if the author were in the Furbers’ dining room taking in the eleven tureens of their service, he gives special attention to the form:

But what soup or nectar of Jove, is worthy to rest in that elysium of art which we profane with the name of tureen! The white glory of its interplay sheen and shade, lit up again with dewy sparkle of cut foliage festooned to either side, then surprised by a delicate molding of gold, and reflected back on itself from the mirror-like plateau or tray beneath, with rim of pale gold bass-relief that catches and blends the chaster luster with its own in a silver-golden halo... if though couldst have seen this silver picture wreathed in golden haze.<sup>321</sup>

Drawing attention to the popularity of ice bowls, the essay describes “bowls of crushed ice rimmed with pendent icicles of frost-silver, and their bases piled with rugged arctic scenery, in blocks and bergs and polar bears—all these are so at home in the expressive metal that they seem to cool with air.”<sup>322</sup> Within a year, an ice bowl of the exact description accompanied with a pair of ice tongs in the form of harpoons with ropes twisted around the handles would enter the Furber Service. The essay also uncannily describes the twenty-four Japanesque open salts and pepper shakers of the Furber Service yet to be ordered, marveling at “the iridescent oxides and

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 208. Ice bowl and tongs accession nos. 1991.126.54 (for image see [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2451\\_ice\\_bowl](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2451_ice_bowl)) and 1991.126.45.25 (for image see [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2508\\_tongs](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2508_tongs)).

golds on the dainty little butterflies just flitting over the edges of the silver salt-cellars, and the fanciful form of the chased pepper-bottles...within reach of every hand.”<sup>323</sup>

By time of the Scribner’s article, the Furbers had purchased approximately 70 percent of the pieces that would ultimately comprise the service and were entertaining in grand style as noted by a newspaper article chronicling a lavish dinner of over a dozen courses with a menu of “clams, and consommé, five wines and liqueurs, scalloped lobster, filet mignon, mushrooms, roasted chicken, veal sherbets, strawberry omelet, cheese, fruit, petits fours and the usual variety of vegetables and salads.”<sup>324</sup> The article noted that “carnations and roses overflowed from silver vases” and claimed that “no kindred occasion in America has ever inspired its equal.”<sup>325</sup>

Gorham produced no commissions nor realized any sales associated with the Furber Service in 1877, which may possibly be attributed to a number of factors. Attempting to separate their retail and wholesale operations in New York, as well as open an alluring showroom at a fashionable address, Gorham retained their wholesale location in the Waltham Building on Bond Street and opened a retail location at 37 Union Square in 1876. Their plans were foiled when the Waltham Building burned to the ground in 1877, forcing an unproductive and disruptive consolidation of operations to the Union Square premises.<sup>326</sup> Furber was also facing a professional crisis along with his fellow officers of Universal Life Insurance Company, who were being sued for millions for conspiracy by the company’s policy holders.<sup>327</sup> Two years later, a not-guilty verdict was delivered and Furber moved to Chicago to become a partner in the law firm that controlled the National Life Insurance Company.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Conant (1874), 207.

<sup>324</sup> “Biography of Henry Jewett Furber,” File II, Furber Collection, Historical-Museum, GMCA.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Venable, 44.

<sup>327</sup> “Sued for Four Millions. The Universal Life Insurance Company’s Troubles,” *New York Times*, July 18, 1877.

<sup>328</sup> Meras, unpaginated.

Although only three pieces joined the Furber Service in 1878, they signaled a seismic stylistic shift in the aesthetics of both the Furber Service and the Gorham Manufacturing Company. With only two notable deviations, the 1873 Egyptian Revival wine decanter set and the 1875 ice bowl and tongs adorned with caribou heads and polar bears, the style of the Furber Service remained true to Pairpoint's Renaissance Revival High Victorian designs, but in 1877 Pairpoint left Gorham to work for Meridan Britannia Co. of Connecticut and interest in the excess of classicism partnered with nineteenth-century grandiosity was waning.<sup>329</sup> Japan's display at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition had swept in a trend, igniting the American Aesthetic Movement and transforming the nature of the country's preferences in silver design. Furber was not immune from the force of this stylistic impact; in 1878 he ordered a water set, comprising a pair of cups and pitcher with an oval tray.<sup>330</sup> The combined simplicity, exoticism and naturalism of Japanese design were considered particularly avant-garde and innovative in nineteenth-century America. Reflecting the intended contents, the Japanesque hand-engraved decorations of the simply-formed pitcher and cups cleverly depict a watery lower half swimming with fish and turtles, while the sky above is populated with butterflies and dragonflies in the manner of Katsushika Hokusai's *Manga* imagery.<sup>331</sup> The accompanying oval tray continues the fresh-water imagery with a profusion of aquatic plants and flowers and a scalloped edge ornamented with cattails and reeds. Although the ornamentation on the water set is radically different from the services' pieces that proceed it, it can be imagined that the

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<sup>329</sup> Wine decanter set accession no. 1991.126.38.1-4, for image see Veneale, fig. 3.25. The design of the wine decanter set is credited to George Wilkinson (1819-1894), Gorham's head designer beginning in 1857 and general superintendent of the plant until his death in 1894. The wine decanter set is decorated with falcons wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, representing the god Horus and divine kingship in the ancient kingdom.

<sup>330</sup> Water pitcher accession no. 1991.126.48 (for image see [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2529\\_water\\_pitcher](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2529_water_pitcher)), pair of cups accession nos. 1991-126.49.1-.2 (for image see [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2530\\_pair\\_of\\_cups](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2530_pair_of_cups) and [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2531\\_pair\\_of\\_cups](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2531_pair_of_cups)), tray accession no. 1991.126.50 (for image see [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2528\\_tray](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2528_tray)).

<sup>331</sup> For discussion of Gorham's use of Hokusai's *Manga* imagery, see Chapter II, p. 18-38, 45.



sustained use of sterling silver with gold in a combination of smooth and matte textures with engraved ornament ensured a harmonious appearance on the table and celebrated the nineteenth-century ardor for mixing together various styles, creating an eclectic yet concordant whole.

The purchase of the water service reignited commissions for the service and set in motion Furber's purchase of nearly 220 pieces of Gorham Japanesque silver in 1879, accounting for 95 percent of the completion of the service over the next two years. The Furber Service's Japanesque pieces include twenty-four each of large fruit or dessert plates, small fruit or dessert plates, open salts, pepper shakers, butter dishes, berry spoons, ice cream spoons, fruit knives, fruit forks and a pair of tazzas.<sup>332</sup> Classical motifs and High Victorian form gave over to uncomplicated forms of silver and gold, hand-engraved with naturalistic motifs derived from Hokusai and other Japanese design sources in Gorham's library.<sup>333</sup> The Furber Service wares executed in a Japanesque design are those used directly by diners, rather than decorative or service wares, and although they are smaller in scale than some of the grandiose High Victorian pieces, they are associated with costly foods, thus underscoring their prestige and importance on the dining table.

The pair of tazzas and twenty-four small and large fruit or dessert plates are all rendered in silver with a matte gilt ground, and each is finely engraved with a differing realistic design of fruits, flowers and foliage that incorporates shading achieved with gold and copper. The mixed metals are early examples in Gorham's repertoire of adapting the Japanese sensibility of freely employing metal alloys and patinas to be used as various colors in the creation of a broad-

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<sup>332</sup> 24 large fruit plates (1991.126.63.1-.24), 24 small fruit plates (1991.126.64.1-.24), pair of tazzas (1991.126.65.1-.2), 24 open salts (191.126.66.1-.24), 24 pepper shakers (1991.126.67.1-.24), 24 butter dishes (1991.126.68.1-.24; for image see [http://risdmuseum.org/art\\_design/objects/2323\\_butter\\_dishes\\_set\\_of\\_24](http://risdmuseum.org/art_design/objects/2323_butter_dishes_set_of_24), Venable, fig. 6.6 and Carpenter, Plate I), 24 ice cream spoons (1991.126.70.1-.24), 24 berry spoons (1991.126.71.1-24), 24 melon forks (1991.126.73-.1-.24), 24 fruit knives (1991.126.74-.1-.24). A tazza is a shallow ornamental bowl or cup on a high base or pedestal.

<sup>333</sup> For discussion of Gorham's design library, see Chapter II.

spectrum palette of the medium. The company's use of mixed metals would come into full force in the 1880s, as would lifelike renditions of the ornamental motifs. The engraved designs of the Furber Service's Japanesque fruits presage the mixed-metal, three-dimensional versions that would be produced, with fully rendered sprigs of fruit and foliage edging their way across the hand-hammered surface from the copper branches encircling the plate.<sup>334</sup>

The plates and tazzas would have been part of the wares needed to serve a costly, elaborate dessert course, thought by contemporary culinary advocates and critics to be a worthy investment: "The dessert certainly repays, in its general effect, the expenditure upon it of much pains; and it may be said, that if there be any poetry at all in meals, or the process of feeding, there is poetry in the dessert."<sup>335</sup> The main ingredient of desserts, sugar, was imported to America mainly from the West Indies and remained relatively expensive throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>336</sup> In addition, desserts, such as pastries, cakes, and confections, required intense labor and substantial time to produce, and were thus especially prized, prompting the creation of elaborately decorated serving utensils and tableware. The Furber Service order of 1875 included a pastry server, a pie server, twenty-four dessert forks, and twelve pastry knives.

Debuting in the United States in the 1860s, ice cream possessed a special status as a popular and impressive dessert, as its main ingredients—sugar, cream and ice—and its preparation were quite expensive.<sup>337</sup> Uncommon fruits, such as oranges, and nuts served during dessert were also pricey, as they were often transported beyond the local environs and were highly perishable. Among the Furber Service Japanesque silver purchases of 1879 were ninety-

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<sup>334</sup> For an example see Veneale, fig. 6.59.

<sup>335</sup> Susan Williams, *Savory Suppers and Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 122. Quote from Mrs. Isabella Beeton, author of one of the most popular cookbooks of the nineteenth-century, *Book of Household Management*.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>337</sup> Williams, 117.

six pieces of flatware specifically related to the enjoyment and luxury of consuming ice cream and fruit. The twenty-four ice cream spoons with pointed matte gold bowls are cast on each side with a profusion of gilded and patinated leaves, fruits, and flowers reminiscent of the all-over tightly-placed Japanesque designs found on Japanese metalwork shown at world's fairs and exported for Western markets, as well as other media such as lacquerware, cloisonné enamel wares, and especially swords and sword fittings.<sup>338</sup> Similarly, the twenty-four berry spoons feature mixed-metal naturalistic ornament; the bowls are described in the inventory as being “in the shape of an Oriental fan.” The Japanesque design of the Furber fruit knives and forks derives from handles of *kogatana* (small knives carried in the sword scabbard) known as *kozuka*, an important part of Japanese sword fittings<sup>339</sup> Possessing cast bronze handles with silver and gilded decorations of mythological figures, birds, marine life, horses, military furnishings, masks, deer, bulls, and flora, the forks and knives feature tines and blades decorated with bright-cut Aesthetic floral and textiles patterns. The Furber flatware is an early example the company's second Japanesque flatware pattern. Introduced by an unknown designer, the pattern was known as “Number 5” by 1881, and was limited to dessert knives and forks, later expanding to fish forks. An 1879 and an 1880 photograph in the Gorham Company archives depict what are apparently genuine Japanese *kozuka*, which could have also been the design source.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> *The Gorham Design Library Gorham Annual Catalogs 1880-1909* (Providence: Brown University and The Owl at the Bridge in association with Joseph Merritt & Co. and Newbrook, Inc., 2003), Disk 2, 1880-1885. Examples of Japanese all-over designs can be found in Joe Earle, *Splendors of the Meiji: Treasures of Imperial Japan* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Broughton International Inc., 1999), 69, 84, 128, 132, 168, 194, 226, and 248.

<sup>339</sup> Joe Earle, *Lethal Elegance: The Art of Samurai Sword Fittings* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2004), 30, 234, 235. Kanzan Satō, *The Japanese Sword: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. Joe Earle (New York: Kodansha International, 1983), 162, 198.

<sup>340</sup> The Gorham Manufacturing Company, *Photo Book Silver Flatware 1885* (GMCA), 79. The photographs are code-dated “L” for 1879 and “M” for 1880.

Along with sugar and cream, butter remained a luxury food item through the nineteenth century, despite the establishment of butter factories, or creameries, in 1861.<sup>341</sup> The invention of the cream separator in 1880 would eventually decrease the cost of production, but in an effort to limit guests' intake, butter was often served on small dishes, even in the most affluent homes. Measuring a mere three inches square, the Furber Service butter dishes aspired to make up in innovative Japanesque design what they lacked in the quantity of butter they provided. A microcosm of Japanese surface textures, mixed metals, and ornament, each of the twenty-four dishes depicts a unique design of bright-cut Hokusai-style birds, butterflies, flowers, bamboo shoots, and textile patterns, rendered in matte silver and gold against textural backgrounds, including *neko-gaki* (cat scratches), *amida yasurime* (radiating lines), *tsuchime* (hammer marks), and *ishime ji* (rough surface tooled with a punch resembling stone).<sup>342</sup> In the same vein, the individual open salts with gold-washed bowls and pepper shakers—twelve with gilt tops and twelve with silver tops—are all bright cut with the same motifs as found on the butter dishes.

A pair of massive thirty-five-inch tall candelabra and a two-foot tall tiered centerpiece were also ordered in 1879. The overall design of these pieces reverts back to some of the elements of the Renaissance Revival High Victorian style of the earlier Furber hollowware, which may be attributed in part to the lack of Japanese examples of forms that lent themselves to these essentially Western object shapes.<sup>343</sup> Even so, the matte gilded triangular panels of swirling asymmetrical foliage and flowers on the four sides of the candelabra's central support take on a note of Aesthetic style not present in the pre-1878 purchases and commission, and the dense, three-dimensional foliage rising in an arc from the top of the central column to the candelabra

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<sup>341</sup> Williams, 117-118.

<sup>342</sup> Earle, 78-9.

<sup>343</sup> Candelabra accession no. 1991.126.81.1-.2 (for image see Carpenter, fig. 61), centerpiece accession no. 1991.126.62.

arms bears a striking resemblance to handles of large-scale Japanese bronze incense burners shown at world's fairs by Japanese metalworkers such as Suzuki Chōkichi, a leading exhibitor at national and international exhibitions and in charge of the metal casting division of Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha from 1874 until 1890.<sup>344</sup>

The completion of the Furber Service occurred in 1880 with the purchase of ten sterling silver oval meat and fish platters with Renaissance Revival borders. These, along with the rest of the Furber Service, are said to have made their last appearance a decade later at a dinner party honoring the actress Lillian Russell at the Furbers' Chicago residence.<sup>345</sup> Family history relates that "Henry J. Furber, by then one of the wealthiest men in the Midwest, took a fancy to the beautiful young actress, and soon after, Elvira Irwin Furber, Henry's wife left suddenly for Italy."<sup>346</sup> Elvira died in Florence in 1912 and Henry died in Chicago in 1916, after a long struggle with diabetes. His estate, valued at over six million dollars, was given to his oldest son, William Elbert Furber, and his youngest son, Frank Irwin; his middle son, Henry Jewett Jr. (1865-1956) was bequeathed nothing by his father.<sup>347</sup> It is theorized that Henry Jr. was seen by his father as "too strong a man in his own right—too keen competition for his father—to be willed anything of his father's millions," but his mother, who owned the Furber Service at the time of her death, made partial amends for the father's shunning by willing to Henry Jr. the service, valued at one million dollars in the 1960s.<sup>348</sup>

Said to be a less extravagant and flamboyant man than his father, Henry Jr. achieved a number of distinctions in his life, including a Ph.D. in economics from Halle University,

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<sup>344</sup> For examples of Japanese bronze incense burners shown at world's fairs, see Doi, et al., *Japan Goes to the World's Fairs: Japanese Art in the Great Expositions in Europe and the United States 1867-1904* (Tokyo: NHK and NHK Promotions Co., Ltd. in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Tokyo National Museum, 2005).

<sup>345</sup> "Biography of Henry Jewett Furber," File II, Furber Collection, Historical-Museum, GMCA.

<sup>346</sup> Meras, 11.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

admission to the Illinois bar, election to President of the International Olympic Games Association of 1904 and the award of the French Legion of Honor for his invention capable of locating submarines and aircraft via sound wave technology.<sup>349</sup> With a primary residence of the Chicago Athletic Association, Henry Jr. had chosen a simpler life than his father's and decided to sell the Furber Service back to Gorham through the Swann Auction Galleries of New York.<sup>350</sup> H. T. Brenner, Gorham Merchandise Manager, wrote to Benjamin Swann on August 23, 1949, relating that after seeing pieces from the Furber Service the previous week in New York, "We believe that we should like to have pieces from the collection as examples of early Gorham work for our present-day craftsmen and we would be interested in seeing the entire collection with this in mind."<sup>351</sup> Contemplating whether Gorham wished to purchase part of or the entire collection, Brenner wrote directly to Henry Jewett Furber Jr. on September 14, 1949, indicating, "It may be that we could handle the entire collection for you or it may be more advantageous mutually for us to select some of the more important things."<sup>352</sup> It took only a few months for the decision to be made; on November 8, 1949 a van arrived to pick up the Furber Service crates in New York to return them to Providence, Rhode Island, where they became part of the company's corporate collection and were used for numerous promotional purposes until the service was given to the RISD Museum as part of the 1991 gift.<sup>353</sup> On November 18, 1949, Brenner sent a letter to Furber enclosing a \$25,000 check for the purchase of the complete Furber Service, saying that the arrival of "your grand silver service" at the Gorham Manufacturing Company "has created a lot

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<sup>349</sup> Heller, 5.

<sup>350</sup> Letter to Mr. Benjamin Swann of Swann Auction Galleries from Mr. H. T. Brenner, Gorham Merchandise Manager, dated August 23, 1949. File II, Furber Collection, Historical-Museum, The Gorham Manufacturing Company Archives (GMCA), The John Hay Library, Brown University.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Letter to Mr. Henry Jewett Furber, Jr. from H. T. Brenner, dated September 14, 1949, File II, Furber Collection, GMCA.

<sup>353</sup> Letter to Mr. Henry Furber Jr. from Mr. H. T. Brenner, dated November 2, 1949. File II, Furber Collection, GMCA.

of enthusiasm among my associates and everyone is tremendously pleased that we have had the good fortune to bring these pieces back to Providence.”<sup>354</sup>

## **Gorham’s “Oriental East Indian” Tea Service: From Japanesque Aestheticism to American Orientalism**

Embodying a virtual microcosm of myriad Eastern design sources popular in Victorian America, the six-piece silver coffee and tea service successfully harmonizes its divergent ornamentations, while maintaining an undercurrent of the chaotic and exotic. Made by the Gorham Manufacturing Co. in 1886, the set is decorated in the company’s “Oriental East Indian” design, which blended elements of Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Islamic, and Greco-Roman derivation. Tempered enough to pass as proper at afternoon tea, yet capable of fomenting thoughts of mysterious, foreign lands, this nineteenth-century silver ensemble challenged that which was socially acceptable with copious amounts of alluring exoticism.

Although fashioned by hundreds of hours of manpower and sold through the male-dominated retail network, the target audience of such a service was unquestionably female. Its purchase most likely required the approval of the family patriarch, but the set ultimately entered the service of the female domain: the ritual of afternoon tea. Much like in the imagined harem, during afternoon tea women reposed among their own sex, imbibing the exotic Eastern beverage served from ornate, costly vessels representative of the male’s success and consequently the family’s societal standing. Through the service’s stylistic characteristics and particular history of production, display, purchase, and use, the tea service reveals the manner in which such objects reflected and contributed to the concept of American Orientalism, an extension and expansion of

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<sup>354</sup> Letter to Mr. Henry Jewett Furber, Jr. from H. T. Brenner, dated November 18, 1949. Fill II, Furber Collection, GMCA.

Aesthetic Movement Japanesque design, as well as the gendered roles and social customs inherent to the era.

The service, comprising a hot water kettle on stand, teapot, coffeepot, creamer, and sugar and waste bowls, was made in 1886, as indicated by the firm's date stamp of a cross. Indicative of the service's costly manufacturing process, the more than 700 hours of chasing required for the six-piece set represents nearly three months' effort in a sixty-hour week, which, in a ten-man department, meant committing ten percent of its chasing capacity for a quarter of a year for a single service.<sup>355</sup> Works of this rank were often made for exhibition at world's fairs and international expositions and a similar set was shown at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. Featured in Gorham's catalog published in French and English for the 1889 *Exposition*, the set could have been purchased by fairgoers for \$1,033, or approximately \$23,550 in today's market.<sup>356</sup> At the Paris exposition, Gorham was hailed as having "been crowned victors by belle France."<sup>357</sup> Describing Gorham's display at the *Exposition*, an attendee related "that it is impossible to see a greater variety of silver articles in the Paris Exhibition," and claimed that he "could go on almost indefinitely describing the tea sets, punch bowls, tureens, pitchers, candelabra, flower vases, toilet sets, etc., all different in style and decoration."<sup>358</sup>

Gorham's service was created during the height of both the Aesthetic Movement, a style heavily reliant on Japanese design motifs and most prevalently applied to decorative arts objects, and American Orientalism, a style reflected in the work of artists of diverse media. American Orientalism, following the French Orientalist style, was a Western construct of the "Orient," a

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<sup>355</sup> Gorham Costing Records, costing slip for "#2000 Tea Set," volume 6, p. 9, Archives of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

<sup>356</sup> See Katherine Morrison McClinton, *Collecting American Nineteenth-Century Silver* (New York: Scribner's and Sons, 1968) for image of service shown in Gorham's 1889 *Exposition Universelle* catalog.

<sup>357</sup> "The Exposition Awards," *Jewelers Weekly*, 8:24 (10 October 1889), cover story; cited in Venable, 135.

<sup>358</sup> "The Gorham Exhibit," *Jewelers Weekly* 8:8 (20 June 1889): 35-39; cited in Venable, 115.



nebulous geographical location including Moorish, Indian, Islamic, Near Eastern, Far Eastern, and Persian lands. As defined in Edward Said's 1978 landmark publication, *Orientalism*, the creation of the "Orient" allowed westerners to admire that which they found beautiful, sensuous, and exotic, while concomitantly maintaining a perceived moralistic and intellectual supremacy over "Orientals" and their realms.

Illustrating this conflicted mindset, Ella Ferris Pell, one of few female painters willing to traverse the alleged wilds of the Orient, contradictorily described her encounters during her Eastern sojourns from 1872-1878 as enticing and repulsive at once: "It [Jaffa] is the quaintest, queerest, dirtiest, most picturesque town we have yet seen."<sup>359</sup> Despite off-putting accommodations and encounters, artists and their patrons were enthralled with the aesthetics of these distant lands, appropriating and combining with great freedom their designs, ornamental motifs, forms, and subject matters. Lest these combinatory creations stray too far from nineteenth-century Victorian values, a dose of Western content of some manner was usually included.

Reviving almost every design that had come before to form a nineteenth-century historicized encyclopedia of style, Victorians reveled in a pastiche of the past. While some revivalist movements, such as the Gothic, developed from careful studies of original models and prized historical accuracy, the Aesthetic and Orientalist styles avoided faithful reproductions and sensitivity to cultural veracity to create eclectic design schemes.<sup>360</sup> A perusal of period interiors, such as the library of the Samuel Colman house in Newport, Rhode Island, reveals the

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<sup>359</sup> Ella Ferris Pell, *Journal, 1872-78*, 4 volumes, Collection of Fort Ticonderoga, Ticonderoga, New York; cited in Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 141. Pell (1846-1922) was a painter, sculptor, and illustrator, who graduated in 1870 from the Design School for Women at Cooper Union in New York City after studying with the well-known sculptor William Rimmer.

<sup>360</sup> Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25.

inventiveness of Eastern decorative mixtures. Colman, a founder of Associated Artists in 1879 with Louis Comfort Tiffany, Candace Wheeler, and Lockwood de Forest, covered the ceiling with Japanese silks overlaid with an ebony framework of Moroccan influence.<sup>361</sup> The fireplace was a melding of Chinese and Moorish architectural elements crowned with Asian ceramics, while every wall surface was covered with patterned fabrics and hanging Japanese and Chinese scrolls.

In the same vein, the library of the home of Edward H. Williams, constructed from 1880 to 1882 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is an Orientalized homage to Japanese aesthetics mixed with other cultural elements. Often these types of rooms were designed around the collections of the Gilded Age elite, many of whom traveled to exotic locales for leisure and work. Williams, a partner in the Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia, was called to Europe, America, Egypt, Australia, India, and Japan to oversee his firm's projects. The library was chronicled by George William Sheldon, one of the first to document photographically the Victorian abundance of architectural creativity with his 1886-1887 publication of *Artistic Country-Seats*.<sup>362</sup> Sheldon marveled that "the pervading impression of this beautiful room seems as native to Japanese soil as the venerable and venerated Fusi-yama [Fujiyama or Mount Fuji] itself."<sup>363</sup> With typical Victorian *horror vacui*, the library was a dense layering of pagoda-topped bookcases, Chinese lanterns made in New York, European sconces, Chinese Chippendale tables, Yokohama tiles, and Chinese carpets, all under a lofty ceiling painted with Japanesque flowering trees and flying cranes—an environment no Japanese would have recognized as "native to Japanese soil."<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Arnold Lewis, et al., *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age* (New York: Dover Publications, 1987), 53. Designed by the leading architectural firm of the era, McKim, Mead and White, the Samuel Colman house is extant and located at 7 Red Cross Avenue, Newport, RI. For an image see Lewis, 53.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 65. The Edward H. Williams house, demolished in 1912, stood at 101 North 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 53

Gorham's use of profuse, tightly-massed, surface designs emerges as early as the 1850s, with Japanesque elements appearing in the late 1860s.<sup>365</sup> Executed in the repoussé technique, by which the relief design is hammered outward from the inside of the vessel, the profuse design style was also employed by Gorham's competitors, such as Tiffany & Company and Whiting Manufacturing Company, whose tea and coffee services of the 1870s-1890s share affinities with those of Gorham.<sup>366</sup> Taking a cue from the vibrant color palettes and luxuriant materials of Oriental sources, Tiffany created elaborate tea sets, coffee sets, and other vessels that were encrusted with pearls and precious jewels, inlaid with copper and silver, decorated with brilliant enamels, and finished with gilding and ivory finials. The coffeepots of these sets closely mirrored the shape of what were thought to be Turkish examples with tall elongated necks, slender arced handles and spouts, and turban-shaped finials. The form of Gorham's hand-hammered copper coffee pots originates from the Turkish models but then switches nationalities with its Japanesque, silver appliqués of birds, moths, and flowers.<sup>367</sup>

The joining of Eastern and Western design was eloquently assessed and theorized in the 1874 article in *Scribner's Monthly* entitled "The Silver Age," in which the author explains that onto precious metals "the luxurious oriental taste poured itself in ornamentation, crowding every surface with dense and rich designs."<sup>368</sup> He contrasts Asian and Western approaches to metalwork design as "opposite impulses...two antithetical art temperaments or sexes," with "the western, the genius of action, in forms radiant with the graces of mobility or strung with passionate tension; the oriental the genius of luxury, profuse of decoration and in its forms

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<sup>365</sup> Deborah Dependahl Waters, et al., *Elegant Plate: Three Centuries of Precious Metals in New York City* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2000), 498.

<sup>366</sup> The Whiting Manufacturing Company was purchased by the Gorham Manufacturing Company in 1926.

<sup>367</sup> Charles H. Carpenter, *Gorham Silver 1831-1981* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1982), 10.

<sup>368</sup> Conant (1874), 196.

contrasting full, pendent, sensuous curves to the free, erectile sweep of classic outlines.”<sup>369</sup> In this state of opposition, Western aesthetics was suited for sculpture and architecture, while the “sultry splendor” of Eastern art was well-suited to the precious commodity of gold, and “neither was able to fit a form to silver” on their own accord.<sup>370</sup> The essay continues, anthropomorphizing this hemispheric union:

A marriage between them was necessary to the development of fine art in the precious metals, and especially to the production of forms in which the chaste expressiveness of silver could be revealed. A more difficult combination of tempers could not be conceived. A more reluctant union was never consummated....They have never, until the present generation, enjoyed a settled prospect of being happy together, nor seen their offspring advanced to the magnitude and maturity they display in our great Bond street warehouse, or in the international expositions of Europe.<sup>371</sup>

In conclusion of his theory, the author equally credits the success of the “marriage” to both hemispheres and qualifies the “offspring” as a truly newborn creation: “It is not the mere application of decorative art to classic form which has given art at once a new phase and a new material in silver....it was not classic form *plus* oriental ornament, but a third entity unknown to both...as could be effected in no other material.”<sup>372</sup>

The second page of Gorham’s catalog of Autumn 1880 features a black-and-white photograph of the firm’s wares, including pieces from two services, the exterior surfaces covered with all-over tightly-placed Japanesque design motifs inspired by not only Japanese metalwork shown at world’s fairs and exported for Western markets, but also by lacquerware, cloisonné enamel wares, shibayama ware, porcelain—especially Satsuma ware—and swords and sword

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 196-7.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 197.

fittings.<sup>373</sup> The first object mentioned in the firm’s 1881 catalog text is the “Tea Set of Japanesque design,” noting that it “has been recently forwarded to their Salesroom, in Union Square.”<sup>374</sup> Extolling the service’s densely patterned surface, the text continues: “For its consistency in design and exquisite finish it is offered as an example of the marked progress in this branch of industrial art.”<sup>375</sup> That Gorham chose its Japanesque service as the object with which to promote their finest works in their fashionable New York retail showroom, as well as to represent their overall achievement in silversmithing in their annual catalog introduction, evidences the style’s status as the core of the firm’s most successful and sought-after creations.

Gorham’s 1882 catalog includes an essay from the *Jeweler’s Circular* praising the “ingenious handwork” and noting “the increasing tendency toward all things Oriental, Japanese, Indian, and other designs.”<sup>376</sup> The listing of tea and coffee services boasts that the firm’s “present stock embraces upward of sixty different varieties, including plain, chased, and otherwise decorated sets,” and of the six illustrated, the three on Plate II are all profusely decorated, featuring a distinctly Aesthetic Movement Japanesque design.<sup>377</sup> All six services comprise six pieces like the RISD example, including a kettle on stand.<sup>378</sup> In particular, the catalog calls out No. 1580, which is the most ornately decorated with hand-hammered finishes on the lids, as “an exquisitely beautiful production,” and the service that includes “the best

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<sup>373</sup> *The Gorham Design Library Gorham Annual Catalogs 1880-1909* (Providence: Brown University and The Owl at the Bridge in association with Joseph Merritt & Co. and Newbrook, Inc., 2003), Disk 2, 1880-1885. Examples of Japanese all-over designs can be found in Joe Earle, *Splendors of the Meiji: Treasures of Imperial Japan* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Broughton International Inc., 1999), 69, 84, 128, 132, 168, 194, 226, and 248.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, 30, Plate I and II *Sterling Silver Tea Sets and Kettles*. Illustrated in Plate I are No. 1400, 1570 and 1550; in Plate II are No. 1661, 442, and 1580.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 32. The catalogue notes: “A greater proportion of Kettles to Tea Sets have been made the past years. Formerly the Kettle was seldom considered a necessary part of the Tea Service, while now the set is seldom sold without it.”

examples of the chaser's art."<sup>379</sup> The "Oriental East Indian" style begins to emerge in the illustration of the No. 442 set, of which the catalog states: "The 442 set we have selected as a good specimen of the Indian Chasing, more expensive than the former," referring to No. 1661."<sup>380</sup>

By 1883 the Gorham catalog is illustrated with nine tea services; two of the Japanesque models, No. 1580 and No. 1661 return; No. 442 is not shown and has been replaced with No. 1660, a set in the same form as No. 1661 with an all-over hand-hammered finish.<sup>381</sup> Two more models, No. 1333 and 1720, have been added, both of which feature all-over tight floral designs. Evidencing the continued and increasing popularity of Japanesque design, and thus the company's decision to offer the style at a lower price point, a silver plated set, No. 0680, similar to the sterling models, is offered.<sup>382</sup> The 1884 catalog illustrates eleven tea sets and retains sterling No. 1580 and 1333, as well as the silver plate No. 0680, while adding new Aesthetic designs No. 1480, a simplified version of No. 1580, and No. 1790.<sup>383</sup> Only cutlery and flatware are shown in the 1885 catalog, with no explanation as to the reason for a change in format.

By 1886 the number of tea services illustrated has grown to twenty—nine are Japanesque in nature, with No. 1333, 1580, 1480, 1790 and 0680 returning, and five new models are illustrated: No. 1860, 1870, 1890, 1910 and 441.<sup>384</sup> In addition, Turkish after-dinner coffee pots, as well as Japanesque tea caddies, have been added. Following an absence of a

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., Plates 5-7 *Sterling Silver Tea Sets and Kettles*. Illustrated in Plate 5 are No. 1400, 1620, and 1750. Illustrated in Plate 6 are No. 1661, 1660, and 1580. Illustrated in Plate 7 are No. 1770, 1333, and 1720.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., Plate 13 *Gorham Plated Ware. Tea Sets and Kettles*, No. 0680.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid. Plate 17-21 *Sterling Silver Tea Sets and Kettles*. Illustrated in Plate 17 are No. 1480 and 1820; illustrated in Plate 18 are No. 1790 and 1681; illustrated in Plate 19 are No. 1400, 1620, and 1750; illustrated in Plate 20 are No. 1580, 1333, 1770; and illustrated in Plate 21 is 1840. No. 068 is illustrated in Plate 30.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., Disk III, 1886-1890. Illustrated on page 69 are No. 1860, 1870, 1890, and 1910; illustrated on page 71 is No. 441; illustrated on page 72 are No. 1580, and 1333; illustrated on page 74 are No. 1480 and 1790; illustrated on page 83 are three models of Turkish after-dinner coffee pots; illustrated on page 85 are three models of tea caddies; and illustrated on page 123 is No. 0680.

catalog in 1887, the 1888 catalog includes ten illustrated tea services, with seven Japanesque models, featuring four new introductions, two of which, No. 2050 and 1810, closely share a simplified appearance of the service shown at the 1889 *Universelle Exposition* in Paris.<sup>385</sup> The catalog illustration of kettle No. 2050 is especially comparable in form to that of 1889 service, which is marked No. 2000, most likely a prototype for the line or the first in the series. By 1890, the ascendancy of the Beaux Arts and the decline of the Aesthetic Movement is evidenced by the presence of only three Japanesque models out of a total of fourteen illustrated.<sup>386</sup> Only two Japanesque models remain in 1892, and by 1894 there are none.<sup>387</sup>

Gorham's "Oriental East Indian" design is composed of an all-over pattern of swirls, swags, flowers, stars, shells, stylized acanthus leaves, anthemion, vining foliage, scrolls, textile patterns with fringe and tassels, medallions, aesthetic geometricized designs, orgee arches, lappets, imbricated scallops and fans, classic beading, gadroons, and rosettes—a veritable synthesis of the whole of Owen Jones' *The Grammar of Ornament*. Further compounding the decorative scheme is the realization that each of the six pieces comprising the tea service is individualized in its ornament, yet all come together in a harmonious whole.

Providing a grounding in classical ornament, ancient Greek and Roman design elements decorate the bases of the kettle, teapot, coffee pot, sugar bowl, creamer, and waste bowl. All are encircled with an equally proportioned ornamental band, which features classical swags formed of three beaded strands upheld with rosettes with hanging tassels; above the arc of each swag is

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid. Illustrated on page 97 is No. 2060; illustrated on page 100 are No. 2110 and 2030; illustrated on page 101 is No. 2090; illustrated on page 102 is No. 1810; illustrated on page 103 is No. 441; illustrated on page 104 is No. 1333; illustrated on page 105 is No. 2050; illustrated on page 106 is No. 1790; and illustrated on page 181 is No. 0680.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid. Unpaginated photographs depict No. 1333 and 1930; illustrated on page 7 are No. 441 and 1621; illustrated on page 8 are No. 1770 and 1790; illustrated on page 9 are No. 1841 and 1850; illustrated on page 10 is 2050; illustrated on page 11 are No. 1890 and 2180; illustrated on page 11 are No. 2240 and 2301; an unpaginated drawing illustrates No. 2070; and an unpaginated photograph illustrates five Turkish coffee pots.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., Disk IV, 1892-1894. Illustrated on page 18a is No. 2050 and illustrated page 22a is No. 1333.

an eight-lobed boss. The next ascending register is composed of a traditional convex gadroon molding of alternating smooth and beaded flutes. Continuing a classical path, the five ornamental bands surrounding the openings of the kettle, waste bowl, sugar bowl, creamer, and teapot begin with a flat-fluted gadroon molding that wraps around to the top edge to continue into the interior, below which runs a line of solid beading; the coffee pot, which possesses an elongated neck, features a horizontal three-lobed husk border rather than the solid beading.

The next descending layer of decoration is different on each piece: the kettle with adorsed swirls resting on the point of a triangle and alternating with inverted shells, the waste bowl with adorsed rinceaux alternating with vertical columns of chevrons, the sugar bowl with asymmetrical swirls connected by radiating diagonal waves, the creamer with inverted palmettes connected by a series of horizontal swags, the teapot with imbricated adorsed heart-shaped swirls, and the coffee pot with imbricated scallops ornamented with series of triangular rays. This band of ornament is followed below by a second layer of flat-fluted gadroon molding and then a second layer of ornament that differs on each piece: the kettle with alternating upright and inverted half circles interspersed with circles, the waste bowl with a zigzag pattern, the sugar bowl with pointed-end oblongs alternating with horizontal lines, the creamer with connected open-centered circles, the teapot with two-lobed horizontal husks, and the coffee pot with connected solid circles.

Taking on a Middle Eastern or Moorish tone, the sides of the kettle's stand branch upward at the top to form curvilinear members, which provide a resting place for the kettle's pegs. Also found at the base of the stand's side supports, these sinuous freeform elements are reminiscent of the arced flanges and winged handles that spring from the top of Moorish vases, such as the fourteenth-century *Alhambra Vase* of Malaga, Spain, which was copied by American



artists, such as ceramicist Cordellia A. Plimpton of the Cincinnati Pottery Club in 1881.<sup>388</sup> Europeans created hybrids of these ovoid storage jars, such as Royal Derby's pair of bottles, which combine the flanges with a pilgrim bottle form. One of the most pronounced Middle Eastern design elements is found on the elongated neck of the coffee pot, which is encircled by three ogee arches, enclosing a symmetrical flourish of arabesque foliage and laid against a ground of alternating tiles decorated with geometricized designs. Although the ogee, or *cyma reversa*, arch would have been seen as quite exotic in 1880s America, the form is easily located within the architectural lexicon of ancient Persia, ancient Rome, and the English and French Gothic styles. The inclusion of an ancient Greek meander pattern in the tiled ground continues to obscure a pure design source, even within a single element of the service's design scheme. Continuing the amalgamation of multi-cultural design, the bulbous finials of the kettle, coffee pot, teapot, and sugar bowl, typically referred to as onion domes, most readily call to mind Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture, but are common forms in Russian, Bavarian, German, Austrian, Indian, northern Italian, and Middle Eastern structures.

Turning to the Indian component of the pattern's title, circular designs found in Indian temples become ornamental bosses and serve as the forms of the hinged lids of the kettle, teapot, and coffee pot, as well as the sugar bowl's removable lid. Deriving from such sources as Kankali Tila Shrine near Mathura in northern India, an important repository of ancient Indian art, the bosses found on the base borders, on and beneath the apogees of the central body swags, and at the top of the kettle stand supports, echo the multiple-petaled stylized circular floral designs of the Mathura school.<sup>389</sup> Plan views of the finials set against the design of the lids become lobed compositions following the designs of Mathura decorative elements, as well as the ornament

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<sup>388</sup> Edwards, 182.

<sup>389</sup> Jamila Brij Bhushan, *Indian Jewelry, Ornaments and Decorative Designs* (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1955), unpaginated.

found at Sanchi, the site of the Great Stupa built by Ashoka the Great to house the relics of the Buddha.<sup>390</sup> The rounded form of the stupa is recreated in miniature with the domed lids of the teapot, coffee pot, kettle, and sugar bowl.

Most pronounced of all the tea service's Indian ornamentation are the draped swags that wind their way around the bodies of all of six pieces. Echoing the swirling and curving patterns of Indian textiles and carpets, the teapot's motifs are most closely related to the shawls of Kashmir, a historical region in northwest India and northeast Pakistan. First imported to the West in the late eighteenth century via the East India Company, the Kashmir shawl became the garment most associated with the exoticism of the East.<sup>391</sup> Enhancing French women's allure and worldliness, paisley shawls from Kashmir first appeared in the sketches of French painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres in the 1790s, and became a frequent accessory in his full-scale oil paintings, such as that of Madame Rivière in 1806.<sup>392</sup> Exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851 in London, the display of Indian textiles was favorably described by Sir George Watt: "The Kashmir *Pashminas* and shawls were for the first time displayed to Europe in a sufficiently exhaustive manner to convey a fair conception of their merit and beauty."<sup>393</sup>

The export of Indian shawls doubled between 1850 and 1860, and by 1872, 80 percent of the shawls produced were shipped throughout the Middle East and Britain.<sup>394</sup> British women were the first Westerners to embrace the bold, colorful patterns of Kashmir textiles, and as early

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<sup>390</sup>Enakshi Bhavnani, *Decorative Designs and Craftsmanship of India* (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 1968), plate 7, 8.

<sup>391</sup> Monique Lévi-Strauss, *The Cashmere Shawl* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), 16.

<sup>392</sup> For image see Lévi-Strauss, 22.

<sup>393</sup> Sir George Watt, *Indian Art at Delhi, 1903. Being the official catalogue of the Delhi exhibition, 1902-1903* (Calcutta, Superintendent of government printing, India, 1903); cited in Kyburg Limited, *Kashmir Shawls: Woven Art and Cultural Document* (London: Kyburg Limited, 1988.), 7. Sir George Watt (1851-1930) was a professor of botany, as well as a reporter and editor. After attending the University of Aberdeen and the University of Glasgow, he graduated with as a Doctor of Medicine and accepted a post in India to pursue his botanical interests. He published *the Dictionary of the Commercial Products of India* (1889-90) in ten volumes, which is perhaps the largest compilation of Indian plants in terms of variety and depth to date.

<sup>394</sup> Kyburg, 7.

as the end of the eighteenth century, the shawls were a requisite wardrobe staple, donned by any fashionable female before embarking on an outing.<sup>395</sup> Kashmir shawls made their way to America beginning in the late 1850s to early 1860s.<sup>396</sup> The tea service's riot of coiled whorls surrounding the lids, spouts, and handles of the kettle, coffee pot, teapot and sugar bowl playfully mimics the forest of volutes that snake across an 1850's Kashmir shawl, as well as accurately replicate the intricate patterns repeated within the outlines of the individual swirls.<sup>397</sup> The undulating, looped swags follow the loping rhythm of the wave-like border which winds along the border of a circa-1870 Indian shawl.<sup>398</sup>

Gorham's service is a clear attestation to the lack of fear that American silver companies possessed in unreservedly selecting from among these diverse aesthetics. The *Jeweler's Weekly* recounted that Gorham's display at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris was predominantly of their "Oriental East Indian" design. Exhibition ware in the pattern included a pair of candelabra resting on a representation of a sacred elephant standing on a casket-shaped pedestal, and a tureen made in 1887.<sup>399</sup> Representing an early example of the "Oriental East Indian" design, an 1883 centerpiece sports caparisoned elephant heads, whose trunks mimic the vessel's scrolled feet.<sup>400</sup> Created the same year, the "Four-Elephant Fruit Stand" takes the form of a cloth-draped litter, adorned with fringe, borne on the backs of four richly-ornamented elephants.<sup>401</sup> The exaggerated curls of the handle on the RISD's service mimic the earlier scrolling elephant trunks, yet the realistic pachyderm features have been stylized into abstraction. Evoking the draped cashmere shawl and the 1881 cloth-draped Gorham fruit stand, the lids of the

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<sup>395</sup> For image see Lévi-Strauss, 47.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> For examples see Lévi-Strauss, 46, 120 and 121.

<sup>398</sup> Kimberly Masteller, *Silver and Shawls: Indian, Europe, and the Colonial Art Market* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Museums, 2005), 11.

<sup>399</sup> McClinton, 77. Location of candelabra unknown. For an image of the tureen, see Carpenter, 128.

<sup>400</sup> For image see Sotheby's, *Important Americana*, New York, May 23, 2002.

<sup>401</sup> For image see Venable, 165, Fig. 6.35; catalogue entry, 342.

kettle, teapot, coffee pot and sugar bowl are swathed in folds of fabric adorned with a deep fringe that cascades into four points, revealing a basket weave textile underneath in the interstices between the drapery. The tea service's swags, fringe and tassels are also reminiscent of the upholstery trends of the era, by which everything from chairs and sofas to fireplace mantels, tables, and draperies were bedecked with yards of passementarie, such as the drawing room furnishings of the John A. Zerega house built in New York from 1882-83.<sup>402</sup>

This type of juxtaposition of fabric flowing in sinuous lines as well as the snaking, curled lines of paisley shawls rendered in American silver patterns anticipated the Art Nouveau movement, which would arrive in America shortly after the tea service's creation. As in Europe, prototypes of the style's scrolling curves made early appearances in many forms of media, including leather book bindings, such as Elihu Vedder's 1884 design for Omar Khayyam's *Rubáiyat*, a Persian tale championed by the Pre-Raphaelites.<sup>403</sup> The cover's simplified swirls presage the creamer's interlocking curls, as well as other proto-Art Nouveau pieces made by Gorham, such as the 1888 coffee pot and matchbox, each animated with a profusions of swirling designs.<sup>404</sup>

Nineteenth-century Western appreciation of Indian design was brought to the fore with the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, where the British government endeavored to heighten their manufacturers' aesthetic quality and craftsmanship. Indian artisans were deemed "the French of the East for their industrial genius" and seen as "artists in their own field...[creating] an art apart,

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<sup>402</sup> For image see Lewis, 50.

<sup>403</sup> For image see Edwards, 149.

<sup>404</sup> For images see Carpenter, 131.

meaningful in its own context.”<sup>405</sup> Indeed the 1851 Exhibition served as a successful launching point for many Oriental design aesthetics, as evidenced by Owen Jones’ accounts:

The Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations in 1851 was barely opened to the public ere attention was directed to the gorgeous contributions of India. Amid the general disorder everywhere apparent in the application of art to manufactures, the presence of so much unity of design, so much skill and judgment in its application, with so much of elegance and refinement in the execution as was observable in all the works, not only of India, but of all the other Mohammadan contributing countries,—Tunis, Egypt and Turkey—excited a degree of attention from artists, manufactures, and the public, which has not been without its fruits.<sup>406</sup>

Indian silver, first shown at the 1851 Exhibition and continually displayed at subsequent expositions, displayed a curious mix of indigenous ornament applied to European forms. This melding of East and West resulted from the British East Indian Company’s creation of salaried positions for English silversmiths in Madras in the early eighteenth century.<sup>407</sup> Indian smiths trained in English workshops, developing a style which combined local aesthetics and European silver forms, such as an 1860s Renaissance Revival ewer ornamented with round visages of the Hindu sun god, Surya.<sup>408</sup> The 1880s Indian claret jug and map box were similar to the types of wares brought to the Indian Village at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. By the nineteenth century, the hybrid style had grown in popularity in Europe and America through its display at international expositions.

Silver firms such as Gorham and Tiffany attended the expositions, gaining first-hand knowledge of the wares being exhibited from all countries, importing many for retail sale and retention in the companies’ design libraries.<sup>409</sup> At Tiffany, Edward Moore’s collection of Islamic

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<sup>405</sup> Jérôme-Adolphe Blanqui, quoted by H. H. Cole, *Catalogue of the South Kensington Museum* (London:, 1874), 2; cited in Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1977), 226-27.

<sup>406</sup> Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament*, 1856 (Reprint, London: Doring Kindersley Limited, 2004)., 77.

<sup>407</sup> Masteller, 2.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Venable, 175.

pieces included an engraved brass jug inlaid with silver, gold, and niello, formed in the ovoid shape so prevalent among American tea service pieces.<sup>410</sup> Tiffany's Design Library included such titles as Owen Jones' *Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Details of the Alhambra* of 1842-45 and Henry Cole's *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art Exhibited in the South Kensington Museum* of 1874.<sup>411</sup>

Many American artists found Orientalism to be not only a source of inspiration but also an alluring way of life to adopt, if only on a temporary basis. Frederic Church passionately collected exotic *objets d'art* during his travels to the Middle East. Crates of rugs, spears, beads, and curiosities were shipped back to the United States and artistically assembled in Church's residence, Olana, designed by the artist and built from 1870-72. Contemporary photos show guests at Olana dressed in Oriental garb, most likely souvenirs of Church's sojourns. Similarly, William Merritt Chase was photographed in the 1870s in his Tenth Street Studio wearing a fez, surrounded by the exotic props that filled his studio. And yet along with the fascination for the Orient, its inhabitants and all its treasures existed concomitantly with a patronizing air of superiority among Western admirers. The dichotomy between approbation and marginalization can be found in an 1876 Gorham promotional publication, which expresses admiration of the Japanesque style, but reveals an undercurrent of belittlement when describing the nature of the Eastern craftsman:

Truth and simplicity, grace and harmony are characteristics of the work sent out by the untutored native of Japan, who with an intuitive sense of the beautiful, furnishes models for artistic decoration surpassing in many respects the more elaborate and theoretic efforts of our schools of art.<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Charles Carpenter, *Tiffany Silver* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), 28, 202.

<sup>411</sup> Waters, 498.

<sup>412</sup> Gorham Manufacture Company, *American Sterling Silver Ware: A Sketch of the Gorham Manufacturing Company of Providence & New York, U.S.A.* (n.p.: Gorham Manufacturing Company, 1876), 10-11; cited in Yoshihara, 28.

It was this concept of the “untutored native” that allowed for the Western construct of the East as a realm inhabited by peoples inferior not only in their intellectual powers, but also in their moral constitution, and thereby a titillating attraction, especially for the white male. Just as the native craftsman possessed an “intuitive sense of the beautiful,” the Oriental female, or Western females dressed as the like, intuitively suggested the possibility of pleasure, readily achieved. Describing Ingres’ *Odalisque with Slave*, the artist’s student, Eugene-Emmanuel Amaury-Duval, commented on the overt sexuality of the subject: “This woman, lying on the cushions with the unconstrained abandon of a favourite of the harem, intoxicated with perfumes and music, with moist lips and eye half-closed and with loose, unfastened hair, gives the direct lie to those who accord only an austere talent to M. Ingres.”<sup>413</sup>

Although not directly trained by Ingres, Jean-Léon Gérôme (dates) continued the tradition of the French Orientalist style, as he trained many of the American Orientalists of the late nineteenth century. Exhibiting the largest displays, which garnered many awards, American painters, many living in Paris, had succumbed to the allure of the Orient and sought to create their own style in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>414</sup> Paintings such as Gérôme’s *The Snake Charmer* and *The Slave Market* afforded the viewer an unhindered gaze at unclothed bodies, as well as the ability to control said bodies, which were enslaved or provocatively bound by the coils of a snake. Frederick Arthur Bridgman, Gérôme’s student, transformed the French odalisque into what can “be compared to the contemporaneous iconography of the ‘American girl’.”<sup>415</sup> The lounging female is clothed in Bridgman’s *The Siesta*, but her opiate-induced state, which has rendered her prostrate on the richly covered divan, clearly suggests possibilities for male fantasy.

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<sup>413</sup> Aileen Ribeiro, *Ingres in Fashion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 231.

<sup>414</sup> Lois Marie Fink, *American Art at the Nineteenth-Century Paris Salons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 127.

<sup>415</sup> Edwards, 132

This veiled rendition of sexuality was just titillating enough to conjure forbidden dreams, while still passing as an acceptable rendering of a beautiful woman surrounded by the trappings of a luxurious life.

The latter was a state of existence with which many upper class, American women of the nineteenth century could closely relate. Just as “Orientals” were looked upon by Westerners as evolutionary inferior beings, prone to succumbing to emotions and temptations, so too were Victorian females considered in the male-dominated hierarchy of nineteenth-century America. The business of the world was the domain of men while Victorian women were charged with maintaining morality and order in the home as wives and mothers. The ideal Victorian male endeavored to support his family, thus affording his wife a life of leisure with all chores tended to by servants. Author of *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Thorstein Veblen observed that “it is by no means an uncommon spectacle to find a man applying himself to work with the utmost assiduity, in order that his wife may in due form render for him that degree of vicarious leisure which the common sense of the time demands.”<sup>416</sup>

In addition to providing her husband with a vicarious experience, women were the arbiters of style in the home. In Jacob von Falke’s chapter entitled “Woman’s Aesthetic Mission” from his 1878 publication, *Art in the House*, the author relates that “the husband’s occupations necessitate his absence from the house, and...during the day his mind is absorbed in many good and useful ways, in making and acquiring money for instance.”<sup>417</sup> Upon his return home after a long day, the husband “longs for quiet enjoyment, and takes pleasure in the home which his wife has made comfortable and attractive.”<sup>418</sup> Falke credits the female with the taste and aesthetic

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<sup>416</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899 (Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 51.

<sup>417</sup> Jacob von Falke, *Art in the House: Historical, Critical, and Aesthetical Studies on the Decoration and Furnishing of the Dwelling* (Boston: L. Prang and Company, 1879), 315.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.



perceptions that are “natural to her sex” and deems her the “mistress of the house in which she rules, and which she orders like a queen.”<sup>419</sup> Scribner’s *Silver Age* article asserts that the “beauty of the ordinary American table, with its snowy damask and china, sparkling cut-glass, and lustrous utensils of silver, all disposed in the tasteful symmetry native to the American housewife, is a power, and one that goes too near the springs of moral as well as aesthetic culture to be lightly esteemed by the most serious observer. The development of this crowning symbol of domestic refinement is worthy of our attention.”<sup>420</sup>

It was incumbent on the wives of households to choose carefully and correctly the appropriate elements for each room from among the many available for purchase in the newly opened American specialty stores, department stores and furniture showrooms, many of which offered articles imported from what was referred to as the Orient or influenced by such models. Some wealthy women even joined the ranks of male collectors of “Oriental” art, such as Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924), who amassed the collection that is now part of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. Also a patron of American artists, Gardner commissioned John Singer Sargent to paint a portrait of her that would nearly outdo his scandalous rendition of Madame Pierre Gautreau, known as *Madame X*. An enthusiast of Oriental subject matter, Sargent had traveled to the East and endeavored to embody what he deemed its essence in painted visions of a mysterious woman inhaling the intoxicating fumes of ambergris and a nude study of an engaging Egyptian girl.<sup>421</sup>

Executed two years after the tea service’s completion, Sargent’s portrait of Gardner placed the society doyenne in a form-fitting black dress bejeweled with rubies and pearls, against

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Conant, 198.

<sup>421</sup> Ambergris is a substance produced in the digestive system of sperm whales. Its initial unpleasant odor ages to a sweet scent, which was highly valued by perfumers.

an ornate, vibrantly-hued textile of Middle Eastern origin. The artist situated the fabric's medallion pattern behind Gardner's head, creating a halo effect; however, the pattern's connections with sensualities of the East suggest impulses of less angelic intentions. The fabric's design shares affinities with Gorham's "Oriental East Indian" pattern, especially the medallion-shaped motif, which can be found on the supports of the kettle stand. Reflecting Victorian gender hierarchies and Veblen's philosophies, French novelist and essayist Paul Bourget described Sargent's portrait of Gardner as the "*Idole Américaine*" and evocatively expressed that "this woman is an idol, for whose service man labors, whom he had decked with the jewels of a queen, behind each of whose whims lie days and days spent in the ardent battle of Wall Street...these are what have made possible this woman, this living orchid, unexpected masterpiece of this civilization. She is like a living *objet d'art*."<sup>422</sup>

Another female connoisseur of Oriental art, Lucy Truman Aldrich, sister of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and major benefactor of the RISD Museum's Japanese collections, claimed on an excursion to Japan, "I'd much rather be a Buddhist than a Baptist anyway—the whole thing appeals so much more to my temperamental, or is it emotional, love of color: the gold and lacquer, the beat of the drums and even the smell of the incense. I love it all."<sup>423</sup> Playing into the chauvinist stance that women's emotions were often beyond their control, female abandonment to exotic goods nonetheless allowed them to step into the purported decadence that males encountered on their Eastern travels, without leaving the country or transgressing the boundaries of Victorian propriety. As consumers of foreign goods and "queens" of the domestic realm,

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<sup>422</sup> Paul Bourget, *Outre-mer (Notes sur l'Amérique)*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1895), 147-50; cited in Patricia Hills, et al., *John Singer Sargent* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1987), 95.

<sup>423</sup> Yoshihara, 23.

women controlled the cultural clout of the family and thus became signifiers of class status.<sup>424</sup>

By introducing an element of exoticism into the domestic sphere by means of their own volition, women challenged the gendered hierarchy, thus achieving a sense of liberty and power.<sup>425</sup>

Facilitating the procurement of Oriental wares in the United States was the New York establishment of A. A. Valentine & Co., opened in Manhattan in 1869 and claiming to be “Importers for the Empires of Japan, China, India, Turkey, Persia and the East.”<sup>426</sup> Well-to-do women could venture into this Manhattan emporium of the exotic or peruse their catalog, *The Wonder Book*, for such luxuries as ivory carvings, porcelains, and rugs, as well as more intimate items, including soaps, incense, and “Oriental perfume.” The company’s ribbon-bound catalog, reminiscent of a travel souvenir book, positioned the female patron not only as an entitled consumer but also as a sort of privileged “armchair traveler.”<sup>427</sup>

Further underscoring the hypocrisy of Victorian morality, as well as the double standard applied to women, Veblen comments that the use of stimulants, including intoxicating beverages and narcotics, was acceptable, if not expected: “If these articles of consumption are costly, they are felt to be noble...therefore the base classes, primarily the women, practice an enforced continence with respect to these stimulants.”<sup>428</sup> Whether Veblen would consider tea and coffee stimulants is debatable; however, since their discovery as a desirable beverage in China in the third millennium BCE and subsequent worldwide exportation, they have been brews associated with culture, luxury, ritual, and exoticism in the West.<sup>429</sup> Although both women and men consumed tea and coffee, the occasion of the afternoon tea was the domain of women, who

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<sup>424</sup> Mary Blanchard, *Oscar Wilde’s America: Counterculture in the Gilded Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), xiii.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Yoshihara, 31.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>429</sup> Rupert Faulkner, *Tea: East and West* (London: Victoria and Albert Publications, 2003), 30.

bonded in a female ritual of camaraderie. It was also a sort of female-gendered domestic arena in which the participants vied for social status and cultural supremacy, as a contemporary stereoview photo, entitled “Gossip—at every sip a reputation dies” suggests.<sup>430</sup>

While Gorham was celebrated in France, at home in Middletown, Ohio, Paul John Sorg, a wealthy tobacco entrepreneur and eventual owner of the Gorham “Oriental East Indian” tea service shown at the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, was the sovereign of his realm as well.<sup>431</sup> By 1889 his fortune was made, and he and his wife, Susan Jennie Gruver Sorg, were one of the wealthiest families in town. While Paul grew his business interests and served in the United States Congress as an Ohio Representative, Jennie was described as “the undisputed leader of Middleton society...and did not hesitate to show her wealth.”<sup>432</sup> Her husband, Paul J. Sorg, was founder and owner of the P. J. Sorg Tobacco Company, which employed 300 men and manufactured 1.6 million pounds of tobacco in 1881.<sup>433</sup> The Sorgs married in 1876 and raised their son, Paul Arthur Sorg, and their daughter, Ada Gruver Sorg, in the Sorg Mansion on South Main Street, which was completed in 1888, just before the couple purchased the Gorham tea service. The couple attended operas at the Sorg Opera House, built by Mr. Sorg for his wife in 1891. A local resident recalled attending performances in his youth and seeing Mrs. Sorg, whom he called “the dowager empress,” at the opera “nearly always attired in a dark silk dress...literally ablaze with diamonds and precious jewels. Her bracelet had some of her emerald collection; she also wore a diamond necklace.”<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> See Kathryn Grover, *Dining in America 1850-1900* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987).

<sup>431</sup> Middletown Public Library Archives (125 South Broad Street, Middletown, Ohio), “Sorg Family” file.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.* The P. J. Sorg Tobacco Company was bought from Paul J. Sorg by the American Tobacco Company, maker of Fatima Cigarettes, for \$4.5 million in cash in 1898, and became known as the Paul J. Sorg branch of the American Tobacco Company.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*

Jennie staged many elaborate fetes at their home, thought to be the most prestigious in the neighborhood. As guests arrived in carriages, they would walk from the curb and ascend the mansion's front steps on a red carpet that the hostess had rolled out for such occasions.<sup>435</sup> A member of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Republic, Jennie often hosted meetings at the Sorg Mansion, during which Helen Gerber Ramsdell, a talented pianist in high school at the time, gave recitals on three occasions.<sup>436</sup> Mrs. Ramsdell remembered that "upon entering there was the beautiful stairway, I turned left to go to the music room where there was a lovely piano."<sup>437</sup> The *Cincinnati Enquirer's* edition of July 28, 1896 included an illustration of the Sorg Mansion's Main Hall and an article describing its appointments:

The main hall of Mrs. Paul J. Sorg's palatial home, at Middletown, Ohio, is in every respect an ideal hall. Large and roomy, with broad stairs; a yawning, old-fashioned fireplace; daintily curtained windows, and portiered arches surprising one at every turn; niches ornamented with statuary; frescoed walls and elegant furniture, there is nothing left to desire.<sup>438</sup>

A fellow member of the Daughters of the American Republic, Mrs. Herbert Fall, recounted a meeting at the Sorg Mansion: "Mrs. Sorg presided at the tea table and served me. She was always dressed in beautiful clothes."<sup>439</sup> One can easily image Jennie hosting a tea attired in sartorial elegance while presiding over her tea table set with the Gorham "Oriental East Indian" tea service, each piece engraved "S. J. Sorg" with "Sorg" engraved in the kettle's handle in a curvilinear script. The *Ladies Home Journal* eloquently described the accoutrements of the tea table in 1884: "The tea-table is as a flower of this growth that we call home. It is like the 'round table' where the knights come together. Or it is the shore where the drift from the waves that surged through the day, is deposited. Foolish things and useless things, and true and precious

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

things are stranded there.”<sup>440</sup> Among the precious things made by Gorham to be “stranded” on the tea table were sets of tea flatware, tea bells, tea balls, and strainers.<sup>441</sup> Like the tea service, these pieces of silver were often elaborate and a little more exuberant in their designs than the silver used for dinner. Suggesting that the strict etiquette rules demanded during the evening meal could be slightly relaxed at afternoon tea, the *Cosmopolitan Cook and Recipe Book* suggested in 1888 that tea time was “charming when contrasted with the anxieties, formality, and etiquette of the dinner table.”<sup>442</sup> Attempting to persuade women to introduce some eclecticism to the dinner settings, Clarence Cook’s 1881 *The House Beautiful* posited: “I don’t know why we should insist on having all the pieces...alike. Why have everything in sets? We already allow ourselves some freedom at dessert and at tea; why not, ladies, make a heroic [sic] strike for freedom the table round?”<sup>443</sup>

Clearly, Jennie’s table was not adorned with pieces all of the same mold, but rather a shining amalgam of exotic extravagance, reflective of the diverse and dynamic creations of the Gorham Manufacturing Company in the late nineteenth century. Based on the Sorg’s financial and social successes, presumably both had felt the freedom to strike out for themselves in Victorian America. Whether the Orient was revealed as a veiled beauty advertising Paul Sorg’s tobacco products, or an ornate tea service gracing Jennie Sorg’s tea table, American Orientalism developed through the inalterable impact of Aesthetic Movement Japanesque design to flourish as a second exotic stylistic campaign in American silver manufactories late nineteenth-century repertoires. The Eastern amalgamation promised and often delivered an imagined, and therefore

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<sup>440</sup> “Around the Tea Table,” *Ladies Home Journal* 2:1 (December, 1884), 2; cited in Venable, 130.

<sup>441</sup> *The Gorham Design Library Gorham Annual Catalogs*, Disk III, 1886-1890, 1888, 141.

<sup>442</sup> *The Cosmopolitan Cook and Recipe Book* (Buffalo: Dingens Brothers, 1888), 12; cited in Grover, 10-11.

<sup>443</sup> Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful: An Unabridged Reprint of the Classic Victorian Stylebook*. 1881 (Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 238.

malleable, sense of place and a temporal state of mind, offering a means by which to escape, if only for an hour or two over afternoon tea.

## Chapter IV: Japanese and American Aesthetic Exchanges: Perceptions, Critical Responses and Repercussions

Upon attending the 1876 Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia, American art critic Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer (1851-1934) poignantly declared that “the grotesque lovelinesses and the majestically splendid trifles of Japan flung their challenge in the face of Yankee steam and steel, and said (with none to contradict), *You are a means towards living: we are an end to live for.*”<sup>444</sup> Van Rensselaer’s laudatory comment aptly reflects the thoughts of many of the ten million exhibition attendees who experienced the Japanese Bazaar, where visitors could sip tea served by waitresses clad in traditional Japanese costumes and purchase imported souvenirs by which to remember their Asian encounters, and the Japanese Dwelling, a traditional residential Japanese structure, displaying a panoply of metalwork, ceramics, furniture, screens, and lacquerware.<sup>445</sup> What would seem to qualify as a resolute attestation of the West’s appreciation for and admiration of Japan’s American international exposition debut ultimately reveals the racially prejudiced undercurrents and significant misunderstandings that concomitantly existed along with praise and a great passion for Japanese art. Van Rensselaer’s choice of the word “trifles” belies what would initially be perceived as true approbation of the art of Japan. Westerners frequently displayed a duality in their treatment of Japanese art shown at

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<sup>444</sup> Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer, *Book of American Figure Painters*, 1886 (Reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), unpaginated.

<sup>445</sup> Neil Harris, “All the World a Melting Pot? Japan at American Fairs, 1876-1904,” in *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, edited by Akira Iriye (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 26-30.

international expositions held around the turn of the twentieth century, which manifested in artistic critique, consumer decisions, and debates on the definition and categorization of art.

Japan's decision to expend \$600,000 on the Centennial Exhibition, send 284 exhibitors, construct two buildings, select more than 30,000 products, pack more than 7,000 crates, and ship 1,300 tons of freight to fill 17,831 square feet of exhibition space was certainly not considered a trifling matter by the Japanese government.<sup>446</sup> Yet, the Japanese people were often looked upon as a simple primitive people, "the children of happy contented men who love their labour as their lives."<sup>447</sup> Although this observation, recorded by English designer Christopher Dresser in a two-volume account of his travels to Japan in 1876-77 certainly displays notes of British imperialism, Dresser's thoughts owe more to a nostalgic longing for highly skilled individual craftsmen operating out of small workshops in the face of growing Western industrialization. Considered in this more favorable light, contemporaneous comments read a little less condemning: "The Japanese artist is still very much like those of medieval Europe working in his own peculiar way, assisted by only a few assistants, and being himself both artist and artisan."<sup>448</sup>

While Westerners were reminiscing about the ideal of simpler ways of past eras, the Japanese government was strategizing to drive their country in a completely different direction. After the opening of Japan in 1854, the formerly secluded country faced the challenge of establishing its national identity on the world stage. Realizing that world's fairs served not only to promote Japanese arts and crafts in Europe and America but also to announce internationally Japan's evolving artistic, technical, and political institutions, the Japanese government

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid., 28; William Hosley, *The Japan Idea: Art and Life in Victorian America* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1990), 33. \$600,000 would be approximately \$12 million in today's market.

<sup>447</sup> Christopher Dresser, *Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers*, 1882 (Reprint, New York: Kegan Paul, 2001), 412.

<sup>448</sup> The Japanese Commission, *Official Catalogue of the Japanese Section and Descriptive Notes on the Industry and Agriculture of Japan* (Philadelphia: 1876), 51-52; cited in Anna Jackson, "Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture," *Journal of Design History* 5:4 (1992), 252.



participated in twenty-four international expositions from 1862-1910.<sup>449</sup> While the country worked towards modernization, the government's decision to leverage their traditional arts at world's fair venues was the agent by which the country gained international importance, expanded their trade and learned of Western technology, which was integrated into their industrialization initiatives. The samurai's loss of power in 1868, which left painters, sculptors, ceramists, metalworkers, lacquerers, and other craftsmen without a ready-made clientele, was fortuitously countered by the rise of world's fairs, popularized in the latter half of the nineteenth century and Japan's participation therein.

Whereas Western markets had been eagerly purchasing East Asian decorative arts for centuries, their acceptance of metalwork sculptures was hindered at times by the unfamiliar forms, subject matter, and amalgamations of design schemes.<sup>450</sup> Japanese artists, who had long profited from samurai patronage, found it difficult to modify their work quickly enough to satisfy such an abrupt change in status.<sup>451</sup> In addition, there were two existing disparate traditions vying for the position of what would be recognized as authentic Japanese art in the Meiji era. The country's focus on modernization in a Western mode prompted many Meiji artists to continue their interest in Western aesthetics by studying with European artists teaching in Japan, as well as traveling abroad to Europe and America to study. Encouraged by Ernest F. Fenollosa and Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913), who unreservedly criticized the negative effects of Western impact on the Japanese artistic culture, other artists endeavored to fuse native techniques and materials with elements of Western aesthetics.

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<sup>449</sup> Gisela Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics: The Art of Japanese Export Porcelain and Satsumaware 1868-1912* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2004), 45.

<sup>450</sup> Ellen P. Conant, *Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting 1868-1968* (Saint Louis: The Saint Louis Art Museum and The Japan Foundation, 1995), 1.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

Before the Meiji era, Japanese metal workers produced mainly Buddhist sculpture, which fell out of favor with the Meiji government's official separation of Buddhism and Japan's indigenous faith Shinto, and swords, which were prohibited by the Emperor Meiji in 1876.<sup>452</sup> In addition, with only religious purpose and military status, neither Buddhist sculpture nor swords and their accoutrements were truly considered to be art in Japan.<sup>453</sup> That sculpture was a viable form of art was a Western concept brought by the country's exposure to European art and the consequent establishment in 1876 of the *Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō* (Technical Fine Arts School) in Tokyo. Contracted to teach at the school from 1876-1882, the Italian sculptor Vincenzo Ragusa (1841-1927) espoused that sculpture was a form of art. He also introduced Western aesthetics, most specifically a sense of realism drawn from direct study of the subject matter, which would soon become evident in Japanese metalwork exhibited at world's fairs.<sup>454</sup>

Although wood-block prints and some Japanese objects organized by the British East India Company had been exhibited at the 1851 Great Exhibition, the first major representation of Japanese decorative arts was brought to a Western audience at the 1862 International Exhibition in London by Sir Rutherford Alcock (1809-1897), Britain's first ambassador to Japan.<sup>455</sup>

Although Alcock's collection was not afforded significant space nor clear distinction from Chinese and Siamese displays, the over six million fairgoers and critics acclaimed the aesthetic and technical mastery of the Japanese wares, as evidenced by the 1862 review by the *Illustrated London News*: "about the very best fine art practiced at the present day in any corner of the globe

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<sup>452</sup> Joe Earle, *Splendors of the Meiji: Treasures of Imperial Japan* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Broughton International Inc., 1999), 64.

<sup>453</sup> Penelope E. Mason and Donald Dinwiddie, *History of Japanese Art* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005), 355-6.

<sup>454</sup> Christine M. E. Guth, "Takamura Kōun and Takamura Kōtarō: On Being a Sculptor," in *The Artist as Professional in Japan*, ed. Melinda Takeuchi (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 153.

<sup>455</sup> Ellen P. Conant, "Refractions of the Rising Sun: Japan's Participation in International Exhibition 1862-1910," in *Japan and Britain: An Aesthetic Dialogue 1850-1930*, eds. Tomoko Sato and Toshio Watanabe (London: Lund Humphries in association with Barbican Art Gallery and the Setagaya Art Museum, 1991), 79. The Japanese had been invited to participate in the International Exhibition of 1862, but declined due to domestic turmoil.

is the decorative art of the Japanese.”<sup>456</sup> Japanese paintings and sculpture were absent from the display; however, members of the Japanese embassy touring the exhibition noticed that there were numerous paintings by Western artists on display.<sup>457</sup> Alcock incorrectly explained to the British public, “There is much, especially in the province of art properly so called, to which the Japanese cannot make the slightest pretensions...No Japanese can produce anything...in oil or watercolors...they do not know the art of painting in oils at all, and are not great in landscape in any material...they have no architecture.”<sup>458</sup> Fuchibe Tokuzō and Kido Takayoshi (1833-1877), members of the Japanese delegation, may not have agreed with Alcock’s views, but felt that the Japanese display, which Fuchibe called a “jumbled mess resembling a curiosities shop,” demonstrated that their country had yet to understand “the purpose of an exhibition,” which “invited contempt for our country on the part of others.”<sup>459</sup> Despite any misgivings or misunderstandings, the South Kensington Museum, which would become the Victoria & Albert Museum, purchased a group of objects from Alcock’s collection that formed the nucleus of the museum’s Japanese collections.<sup>460</sup>

Curiously, Christopher Dresser wrote nothing about Japanese art in his 1862

*Development of Ornamental Art in the International Exhibition*, where he noted: “The object of

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<sup>456</sup> Jahn, 46.

<sup>457</sup> Yuichi Fukuzawa, *Fukuzawa Zenchū*, vol. 19, 1862 (Reprint, Tokyo: 1962), 27-28; cited in William G. Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travelers in America and Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 82.

<sup>458</sup> Conant 1991, 81.

<sup>459</sup> Fuchibe Tokuzō, *Ōkōnikki (Diary of Western Travel)* (1862); cited in Kumiko Doi, et al., *Japan Goes to the World’s Fairs: Japanese Art in the Great Expositions in Europe and the United States 1867-1904* (Tokyo: NHK and NHK Promotions Co., Ltd. in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Tokyo National Museum, 2005), 18. S. D. Brown and A. Hirota, *The Diary of Kido Takayoshi Vol. II, 1871-74* (Reprint, England: Sheffield, 1996), 322; cited in Olive Checkland, *Japan and Britain after 1859: Creating Cultural Bridges* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 16, 21.

<sup>460</sup> Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson, *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1997), 101. The Museum of Manufactures was established in 1852, became the Museum of Ornamental Design in 1853, was renamed the South Kensington Museum in 1857 and then in 1899 was renamed the Victoria & Albert Museum, as it is known today. The South Kensington Museum was built with the profits of the 1851 Great Exhibition of London.

our little work is that of presenting to those who are about to visit the International Exhibition, the means of judging correctly the merits of the works of ornamental art there set before them....By thus pointing out to works of the highest excellence, an opportunity will the more fully be afforded of cultivating the taste, and a wholesome stimulus will, it is hoped, be given to the progress of art as applied to the manufactures.”<sup>461</sup> In this publication the designer expresses his basic beliefs, which are consequently directly related to Japanese art in his later manuscripts, including the idea that “an object must fully answer the purpose for which it has been originated,” “construction should be decorated, decoration should never be constructed,” and “the useful is a vehicle for the beautiful.”<sup>462</sup> A chapter each is devoted to eleven different types of media, including metals, pottery, textiles, and glass. With specific regard to metal, Dresser emphasizes that a material’s cost does not equate with beauty, that “mere value is no indicator of true merit,” and “the simple fact that a work has resulted from the labour of years does not make it beautiful.”<sup>463</sup> This sentiment is reiterated in specific relation to Japanese artists in chapter five, entitled *The Metal Manufacturers*, in Dresser’s *Japan, Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers*, written in 1882 after the designer’s return from Japan. Here he praises the Japanese metalworker for possessing knowledge and refined taste, which have culminated in a work of beauty, while chastising Westerners, who insist on rewarding only the cost of the materials and number of hours to produce an unappealing object that is void of “art knowledge.”<sup>464</sup>

In *Development of Ornamental Art in the International Exhibition*, Dresser also notes the unfavorable comments of fellow designer and artist Richard Redgrave, who agrees with his

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<sup>461</sup> Christopher Dresser, *Development of Ornamental Art in the International Exhibition*, 1862 (Reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), 3.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 55.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>464</sup> Dresser (1882), 430.

colleague's views. Redgrave lamented the quality of Britain's showing of metalworks at the 1851 Exhibition and "...his regrets would again be called forth by the viewing of some works exhibited in the home [British] side of the Exhibition, as loudly as ever, as works of a massive and costly character are exhibited which are touched with the most debased art, or from which all trace of artistic merit is absent."<sup>465</sup> Dresser notes Redgrave's recognition of French entries that ignore the cost of precious metal in favor of artistic effect: "Mr. Redgrave also commends the daring of the French in oxidizing their silver in order to the exaltation of the art, while the metal suffers degradation....In the higher works in silver the foreign artist has had the boldness to regard the material, rich and costly as it is, merely as the vehicle of the art he adds to it; and that luster and brilliancy, which is one of the great excellences of the rarer metals, he subdues by acids to prevent the glare from interfering with the forms of art."<sup>466</sup> Ultimately, and above all, Dresser values and praises the manner in which Japanese metalworkers look upon various metals as a palette from which to select appropriate colors, textures, and finishes, rather than a hierarchy of precious substances with which to determine the numbers on a price tag.<sup>467</sup> Further criticizing his fellow countrymen, the designer condemningly notes that "our workers in precious metals have not yet arrived at such a state of virtue; the value of the mere silver is too great in the eyes of the public to be given up, and the full glitter of its polish must be sought to satisfy their feeling of cost and magnificence."<sup>468</sup> The Japanese inhibition in mixing precious and base metals would soon be taken up in a grand manner by American silversmiths, but the British failed to heed truly Dresser's urgings. In their defense, English smiths faced a great hindrance when endeavoring to

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<sup>465</sup> Dresser (1862), 166.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>467</sup> Dresser 1882, 429-430.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

combine metal types in their works due to the strict British hallmarking practices that withheld an assay on sterling pieces that included non-precious metals.<sup>469</sup>

Japan's next foray into international exhibitions was the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 in Paris, where the country exercised greater control over their display by selecting the objects and organizing the manner in which they would be displayed, thus representing that which the Japanese prized among their arts. Decorative arts remained predominant in the display; lacquer was very popular, Satsuma ceramics were very successful, and the "fine specimens of metalwork" were admired.<sup>470</sup> Still finding the Japanese somewhat curious, American author Timothy Arthur related that "Japan is a country of paradoxes and anomalies. They write from top to bottom, right to left...their landscapes are without prospective [sic], light or shade; their figures without drawing."<sup>471</sup> Nonetheless, the Japanese self-selected exhibition was successful and garnered praise that surprisingly displaced Western superiority: "art is thus not instinctive among Western nations. After the Japanese collection everything looks in a measure commonplace, almost vulgar."<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Charles H. Carpenter, *Gorham Silver 1831-1981* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1982), 120. British silversmithing has been lawfully monitored since the establishment of the Goldsmith's Company in 1300, which was given a royal charter by Edward II in 1327. Hallmarking silver dates to the 1300s, when Edward I passed a law requiring any saleable silver or gold article to possess an alloy standard equaling the quality of the country's silver currency. Goldsmiths' Company wardens regularly examined wares in the smiths' workshops to ensure that the requisite percentage of precious metal was employed. Those articles found lacking were destroyed and the metal was forfeited to the King; those found articles found acceptable were struck with a leopard's head, the mark of the King's authentication. Beginning in 1363, goldsmiths and silversmiths were required to register a unique maker's mark with the Goldsmiths' Company, which was struck on each article they produced. By 1748 the number of London silver workshops and merchants had reached several hundred, prompting the Goldsmiths' Company to summon smiths to the Assay Office, where articles possessing maker's marks were examined and given the three official stamps indicating the place of assay, the date of the article and the approved standard of alloy. British law unequivocally prohibited the sale of finished works without the presence of all four marks.

<sup>470</sup> Conant 1991, 82; Doi, 99; Ellen P. Conant, *Challenging Past and Present: The Metamorphosis of Nineteenth-Century Japanese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 138.

<sup>471</sup> Timothy Shay (T.S.) Arthur, "Queer if True," *Arthur's Home Magazine* 27 (February 1866): 27; cited in Hannah Sigur, *The Influence of Japanese Art on Design* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2008), 29-30.

<sup>472</sup> R. H. Soden Smith, *Dwellings for the Poor*, taken from *Reports on the Paris Universal Exhibition 1867*, Volume 3 (London 1867); cited in Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions, Great Exhibitions and World Fairs* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 148.

In 1868 Charles Locke Eastlake (1836–1906), a British architect and furniture designer, wrote *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details*, one of the most influential books of the nineteenth century on domestic design. Chapters were singularly devoted to appropriate decoration for each room of the house and individual media such as metalwork, glass and ceramics. This title would be the first of many instructing Westerners how to decorate properly their homes, and would as well be one of the first to suggest looking to Japanese aesthetics for guidance. Originally printed in London, this influential volume was published in America in 1872 and went through six American editions before 1881. American author Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford's (1835-1921) publication *Art Applied to Furniture* (1877) claimed, "not a young marrying couple who read English were to be found without 'Hints on Household Taste' in their hands, and all its dicta were to be accepted as gospel truths....The book occasioned a great awakening, questions and study in the matter of household furnishing."<sup>473</sup> Prior to the country's first significant exposure to Japanese aesthetics at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Eastlake's comments went far in preconditioning the American mind to the concept of honesty in decorative arts by directly confronting what he deemed to be the poor state of Western design: "We fall into the double error of adopting endless varieties of style at one time...and, not being content with this jumble, we invent objects constructed of one material with the form and ornamental character which should be the attributes of another. By this means decorative art has been degraded in this country to a level from which it is only now beginning to rise."<sup>474</sup> The designer encourages the study of such things as metalwork, enamels, and porcelain from Eastern countries including Japan, asserting that "it is impossible to overrate

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<sup>473</sup> Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford, *Art Applied to Furniture*, 1877 (Reprint, South Carolina: Forgotten Books, 2012), 147.

<sup>474</sup> Charles Locke Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details*, 1868 (Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 70.

the influence which such objects may have in educating the eye to appreciate what really constitutes good art...may each become in turn a valuable lesson in decorative form and colour.”<sup>475</sup>

Specific to metalwork, Eastlake laments the quality of Western output, claiming that the prevalent “second-rate...commonplace taste...has sent us metal-work from Birmingham which was as vulgar in form as it was flimsy in execution.”<sup>476</sup> The designer reminisces about the “old traditions of design in our metal work, based as they were upon propriety and convenience of form” and regrets the level of neglect of good, appropriate, and reasonable design.<sup>477</sup> A sense of capitulation seems to overtake particular passages, as Eastlake concomitantly demeans his fellow designers, maintains Western superiority and begrudgingly recognizes the skills of Japanese artists:

When I look into the windows of some establishments devoted to decorative art, and see the monstrosities which are daily offered to the public in the name of taste...I cannot help thinking how much we might learn from those nations whose art it has long been our custom to despise—from the half-civilised craftsmen of Japan....<sup>478</sup>

The World’s Fair of 1873 in Vienna marked the presence of Japan’s first delegation of chief Meiji government officials and nationally recognized craftsmen in attendance at an exposition. The country exhibited an impressive sixty-six hundred objects, possibly prompted by the trade and amity agreement between Japan and the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a result of the 1871 East Asia Expedition, the first Western document to bear the imperial seal of the Meiji

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 1-3.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 194.



Emperor.<sup>479</sup> Christopher Dresser proclaimed, “the works of the Japanese are not to be overlooked, for in certain branches of art they are inimitable, and as colourists they are almost perfect.”<sup>480</sup> The sentiments of Jacob Falke (1825-1897) reflected the collective admiration for metalwork: “Skill marks everything produced by Japanese hands...the bronze vessels, decorated with rich, free ornament and occasionally with dragons drawn with the greatest energy, are pure delight with regard to the treatments of the bronze, the casting, chasing and coloring.”<sup>481</sup> Falke’s praise for the lacquerware was also complimentary: “On the same level as the bronze pieces are the lacquered items, still unequalled, and surpassed only by their own predecessors.”<sup>482</sup> Here Falke notes the government’s decision to exhibit not only Meiji lacquerwork but also ancient examples, which spurred orders for traditional-style lacquer at the exposition.<sup>483</sup> Clearly there existed high regard and enthusiasm for the Japanese works; however, simultaneously present was a recognition on behalf of the Europeans that the Japanese aesthetic was quite different than their own, as represented in Falke’s assessment: “there is bizarreness enough—asymmetrical shapes, ornamentation in unsuitable places, caricature-like figures—and yet each piece...has a charm of its own.”<sup>484</sup> Current scholars have noted that the words “grotesque,” “bizarre,” and “quaint” are used in equal measure by contemporary art critics, confirming that there still existed ample ambivalence towards Japan and its inhabitants on the part of Westerners.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Jason Busch and Catherine Futter, *Inventing the Modern World: Decorative Arts at the World’s Fairs 1851-1939* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2012), 119.

<sup>480</sup> Christopher Dresser, *Principles of Decorative Design*, 1873 (Reprint, New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1973), 48.

<sup>481</sup> Jacob Falke, *Die Kunstindustrie auf der Wiener Weltausstellung 1873: Erste Abteilung* (Vienna: 1873), 199; cited in Jahn, 52. Jacob Falke was the director of the *Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie*.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>483</sup> Vos Frits, et al., *Meiji: Japanese Art in Transition: Ceramics, Cloisonné, Lacquer....* (The Netherlands: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1987), 30.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>485</sup> Jackson, 249.

Public response to Japan's showing at the Vienna fair was resoundingly positive, and its exhibitions were awarded 217 prizes.<sup>486</sup> That Japanese decorative arts, such as the ones shown at international expositions, constituted 10 percent of the country's exports from the 1870s-1890s demonstrates that the Japanese were far from "primitive and simple," but rather had successfully honed their business acumen to accomplish their objectives.<sup>487</sup> At the conclusion of the 1873 Vienna International Exposition, the Alexandra Park Company of London approached the Japanese government with an offer to purchase their display pavilion, as well as their remaining stock.<sup>488</sup> The company planned to reconstruct the pavilion at Sydenham Palace, where Japanese crafts would be sold in partnership with the Japanese government.<sup>489</sup> The Japanese Exhibition Bureau agreed to sell the pavilion and its contents but, emboldened by Japan's success in Vienna, the Bureau turned down the offer to establish an export company with Alexandra Park and decided to launch their own.<sup>490</sup>

Although Christopher Dresser stated in his 1873 *Principles of Victorian Design* that "Japan can supply the world with the most beautiful domestic articles that we can anywhere procure," he, too, occasionally fell back on the notion that Eastern success was somehow born of their simplistic nature and strange beliefs: "the sunny climate and religious superstitious of the East called forth the gorgeous and beautiful developments of art which have existed, or still exist, with the Persians, Indians, Turks, Moors, Chinese and Japanese."<sup>491</sup> Yet in the very next sentence he proclaims that "all the forms of ornament which these people have created are

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<sup>486</sup> Jahn, 52; Doi, 26.

<sup>487</sup> Sato Doshin, "The Policies of the Meiji Government for the Promotion of the Craft Industries and the Export Trade," *Meiji no takara = Treasures of Imperial Japan: the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Japanese Art, Vol. I*, eds. Oliver Impey, et al. (London: Kibo Foundation, 1995), 66.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.* The Crystal Palace, built for the 1851 World's Fair in London by Joseph Paxton, was disassembled after the fair and reconstructed at Sydenham, where it stood for the next eighty-five years as the Sydenham Palace.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>491</sup> Dresser 1873, 11.

worthy of the most careful and exhaustive consideration, as they present art-qualities of the highest kind.”<sup>492</sup>

Dresser once again in *Principles of Victorian Design* recognizes French firms, including Maison Barbedienne and Orfèvrerie Christofle & Cie of Paris, for their successful absorption of Japanese metalworking techniques, including the inlay of silver into copper vessels.<sup>493</sup> Emile-Auguste Reiber, director of the design studio at Christofle from 1864 to 1878, is looked upon as the first important French designer working in the Japanese style, including acid-wash baths to produce polychrome patinas.<sup>494</sup> The Japanese-style work of Reiber and others would have been known by American silver firms through their subscriptions to French decorative arts publications, such as *Gazette des beaux-arts* and *Revue des arts décoratifs*, as well as their attendance to the 1867 Paris and the 1873 Vienna expositions.<sup>495</sup> Maison F. Barbedienne, France’s leading manufacturer of decorative bronzes and enamelwork, was a top contender in the metalwork division and received numerous awards at international exhibitions, including medals in three different classes at the International Exhibition of 1862 in London. Christofle & Cie was known for their Japonisme wares and also garnered much attention for their mixed-metal works. These French firms’ adaptation of Japanese aesthetics provided a secondary measure of influence on American consumers and silver companies. Dresser notes that their inlaying of silver into copper and bronze “is a step in the right direction, and should be encouraged by all lovers of art.”<sup>496</sup> Both French firms showed at the 1876 Centennial Exposition, where Barbedienne’s collection “stood unrivaled, being fine art work in every sense of the term, the use of various

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>494</sup> Charles L. Venable, *Silver Made in America 1840-1940: A Century of Splendor* (Dallas: The Dallas Museum of Art, 1994), 175.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid.

tints of bronze, and gilding and silvering where required, displaying great decorative and artistic taste.”<sup>497</sup>

Although Americans drolly wrote about the “quaint little people with their shambling gait, their eyes set awry in their head and their...grave and gentle ways,” wondering “how can it be in them...to make such wonderful things?,” the Meiji government approached the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia with a firm business plan for success.<sup>498</sup> The 1874 *Beikoku Hakurankai Shuppin Gaisoku* (General rules for display items in the American exposition) put forth a demanding challenge for potential participants:

Given the great progress in academic studies and the technique used to create Japanese decorative arts, as well as the need to further increase trade and profit, works...should be exhibited to win high praise from various countries of the world. In order to receive prizes, further refinement in the decorative arts is particularly important. Many of the exhibition works and participating artists received prizes in the Vienna Exposition, and this exhibition must show even greater advances. Commerce will open the road to trade, and attention must be paid to the acquisition of glory.<sup>499</sup>

The government’s ambitious objectives, as well as their hopes for a substantial return on their investment, were fulfilled by the 142 awards bestowed upon the country’s displays and the sale of nearly all of the goods brought to the exposition.<sup>500</sup> Fairgoers were advised to make the Japanese displays a priority; according to *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*: “The Japanese Collection is the first stage for those who are moved chiefly by the love of beauty or novelty in their sight-seeing. The gorgeousness of specimens is equaled only by their delicacy.”<sup>501</sup> A glowing review of the Japanese bronzes by the *Art Journal* suggests that a mind-altering utopian experience was required to produce such creations: “The sight of the Japanese

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<sup>497</sup> Earl Shinn, et al., *The Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876* (Philadelphia: Gebbie and Barrie, 1876), vi, iii.

<sup>498</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 30; cited in Sigur, 40.

<sup>499</sup> Doi, 30.

<sup>500</sup> Hosley, 33.

<sup>501</sup> James D. McCabe, *The Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition* (Philadelphia: National, 1876), 89-90.

display at Philadelphia filled us with amazed excitement, and we demanded of ourselves how these people had attained their Art, and what processes of mind and conditions of society must be passed through by us.”<sup>502</sup>

Metalworks, lacquerwares, cloisonné enamels and ceramics continued to garner praise and receive positive, if not backhanded, critiques: “It is not strange that the Japanese department was one of the main centres of attraction, and the delight of lovers of the curious and the bizarre...and the delicate and intricate workmanship. Of all that was wonderful and beautiful...the Japanese exhibit was certainly not the least bewildering and beautiful.”<sup>503</sup> The large bronze sculptures were duly noted by critics, described as “literally a forest of bronze, with interlacing stems, leafage and feathered, scaled and furry inhabitants.”<sup>504</sup> Yet these were not recognized as sculpture by the Americans and Europeans, and were therefore displayed in the Manufacturer’s Building, rather than with the entries of Western sculpture. American art critic James Jackson Jarves (1818-1888) confirmed the transhemispheric differences regarding the categorization of art, maintaining the Western notion that “statuary, in the European meaning of the word, they [the Japanese] do not possess any more than they do easel paintings or fine architecture.”<sup>505</sup>

Indeed, contemporary observations regarding the construction of the fair’s Japanese buildings, as recorded in the *Masterpieces of the Centennial International Exhibition of 1876*, commented on the manner in which they were “so curiously put together by native workmen, who appeared to do everything exactly the opposite way from which it was done in this country,

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<sup>502</sup> Susan N. Carter, “Brass and Bronze Work at the Centennial Exhibition,” *Art Journal*, 2 (Nov. 1876), 348; cited in Doreen Bolger Burke, et al., *In Pursuit of Beauty: America and the Aesthetic Movement* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rizzoli, 1986), 255.

<sup>503</sup> J. S. Ingram, *The Centennial Exposition, Described and Illustrated, Being a Concise and Graphic Description of This Grand Enterprise, 1876* (Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1976), 559.

<sup>504</sup> Edward C. Bruce, *The Century: Its Fruits and Its Festival* (Philadelphia, 1877); cited in Harris, 32.

<sup>505</sup> James Jackson Jarves, *A Glimpse at the Art of Japan*, 1876 (Reprint, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, Co., 1984), 198; cited in Hosley, 49.

possibly from living in a reversed position on the other side of the globe.”<sup>506</sup> The review of the Japanese Bazaar found it nearly equally attractive and distasteful, mentioning “exquisite designs in woodwork and carvings,” yet commenting that the “very curious bronze pigs” placed under the trees were “exceedingly ludicrous, and without the least particle of beauty, more like infant hippopotamuses than anything else.”<sup>507</sup> The Japanese building methods were met with “great amusement of the bystanders,” but such things as the ability to open and close the sliding wall panels to accommodate weather conditions were recognized as ingenious.<sup>508</sup> Continuing narrative mixes negative and positive descriptions with great conviction and doubt, finally determining that the end result is “so quaint and so evidently entirely Japanese, that...it takes very little effort to imagine one’s self transported to that far-off country in the Pacific Ocean.”<sup>509</sup> The descriptor “grotesque” is used again with such ambiguity that it is difficult to ascertain whether it is a compliment or a criticism: “What grotesque bronzes! what [sic] lovely cabinets!”<sup>510</sup> And yet within this same account, it is claimed, “It has been stated by one fully capable of giving a reliable opinion, that the Japanese display surpasses anything that has ever been shown by a single country at any previous International Exhibition.”<sup>511</sup> Most importantly in terms of the effects of Eastern aesthetics on those of the West, the introductory segment of this three-volume publication specifically recognizes Japan as making an impact: “Many of the designs exhibited give evidence of the high position which Japanese art has gained within the last few years in the tastes of the European world; and some of the specimens designed in this style were exceedingly charming and artistic.”<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> Shinn, cxi.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., cli-clii.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., clxix.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid., clii.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid., cxxvi.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid., clxxx.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid., xxvii.

The array of Japanese wares at the Centennial Exhibition was a catalyst in fueling the mania in the United States for Japanese design, which played a significant part in the development of the American Aesthetic Movement, spanning the 1870s to 1880s. The movement served to elevate the decorative arts to the then-perceived higher level of the fine arts, thus attempting to abolish the demarcation between the two arts. Endeavoring to reform the contemporary taste for historicized revival styles, the Aesthetic Movement sought new sources of inspiration, principally exotic examples of flattened yet intricately patterned design. The combined simplicity and exoticism of Japanese design was considered particularly avant-garde and innovative in nineteenth-century America and served as an exceptional vehicle with which to introduce the idea of geometric minimalism mixed with realistic depictions of nature.

A wave of instructive literature on household art followed the 1876 Centennial Exposition with over fifty titles published between 1876 and 1890, and innumerable magazine articles coached America's readership on creating an artful home.<sup>513</sup> Similar in nature to *Hints on Household Taste* written by Charles Eastlake a decade earlier, *The House Beautiful* was the best seller of all the era's household art publications.<sup>514</sup> The book was based on a collection of essays written by American author and art critic Clarence Cook (1828-1900) for *Scribner's Monthly*, entitled "Beds, Tables, Stools and Candlesticks," which were first published in 1877. The educational yet conversational tone of the book was intended to instruct the American public in procuring stylish and affordable furnishings for their homes, thus bringing beauty and taste to the country's middle class. Recognized as a primer on Aesthetic Movement design, Cook's publication amplified Eastlake's emphasis on sound design principles, honest construction, and appropriate materials. Cook begins in the introduction by granting the reader the right to break

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<sup>513</sup> Karen Zukowski, *Creating the Artful Home: The Aesthetic Movement* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2006), 47.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*

fearlessly free from the excesses of Victorian decoration and pursue their "...own desires and needs, and to refuse to be governed by those of other people...if it does not suit our needs or our purses....Whoever will try the experiment will find the reward in peace, and serenity and real comfort.”<sup>515</sup>

The frontispiece created by artist and book illustrator Walter Crane (1845-1915) immediately acknowledges Japan as a worthy source for fashioning an artful interior with its inclusion of four Japanese fans adorning the fireplace and mantel, as well as shelves prominently displaying blue and white porcelain. Asian and Aesthetic objects abound in the publication's ninety-eight illustrations, encouraging the appreciation for the types of Japanese objects that were shown at the Centennial Exposition and later illustrated in numerous publications. The illustration of a plate entitled "Vignette—Japanese Plate," opposite the beginning of the text for the first chapter, depicts a crane perched on one raised leg amidst a rocky mount, surrounded by bamboo and peonies. This type of design directly recalls Japanese metalwork shown at the Exposition in Philadelphia, as evidenced by an illustration of bronzes shown by Japan in the August 12, 1876 issue of *Harper's Weekly*. In addition to what must have been a sizable bronze figure of a crane, two of the four vases shown in the magazine are decorated with cranes.<sup>516</sup>

Just as Christopher Dresser praised the Japanese metalwork for refined taste and understanding that beauty does not lie in the value of materials, Cook insists that "taste and contrivance are of far more importance than money; and of all the attractive houses...by far the greater number have owed their attractiveness to the taste and to the ingenuity of their owners rather than to their long purses."<sup>517</sup> Japanese scholar and critic Okakura Kakuzō goes one step further, stating that "to a Japanese, accustomed to simplicity of ornamentation...a Western

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<sup>515</sup> Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful*, 1878 (Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 20.

<sup>516</sup> Burke, 256.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.



interior permanently filled with a vast array of...bric-à-brac gives the impression of a mere vulgar display of riches.”<sup>518</sup> Cook urges the stripping away of the superfluous and the inclusion of only truly worthy objects: “The truth is, we are depending too much in these days on furniture and bric-à-brac for the ornament of our houses, and not enough on things more permanently interesting.”<sup>519</sup> To this end, Cook directs the reader to look at nature, a characteristic leitmotif of the Aesthetic Movement: “for nature, who never makes two sides of a leaf alike...will surely repay industrious study of her works by some hint”<sup>520</sup> Just as Dresser was inspired by and encouraged the study of botanical specimens, Cook urges the careful investigation of nature; however, if people “can’t get into the country—to take the next best thing and study the Japanese decoration on books and trays and tea-pots, with a view to ridding their minds of the belief that things ought to be in *suites*.”<sup>521</sup> Here the designer is talking about the Victorian proclivity to make uninspired arrangements that were staid and symmetrical, such as front parlors designed and decorated in the very same manner as the back parlor. Okakura referred to the Japanese house as the “Abode of the Unsymmetrical” and noted that “the Japanese method of interior decoration differs from that of the Occident, where we see objects arrayed symmetrically on mantelpieces and elsewhere. In western houses we are often confronted with what appears to be useless repetition.”<sup>522</sup>

Part of the allure of the Japanese mixed-metal work shown at world’s fairs and the subsequent American creations it inspired was its abandonment of classical rigidity and repetition of form and ornament. Designs, often based on flora and fauna, were asymmetrical, uncluttered and unmatched. This aesthetic approach was adopted by Gorham, who produced a

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<sup>518</sup> Okakura Kakuzō, *The Book of Tea*, 1906 (Reprint, South Carolina: CreateSpace, 2011), 39.

<sup>519</sup> Cook, 319.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>522</sup> Okakura 1906, 39-41.

line of fruit knives and dessert flatware in 1880 with cast silver, bronze, and gold handles copied from Japanese *kozuka* knife handles.<sup>523</sup> The set of twelve fruit knives features deeply oxidized bronze handles, each with a different design of Japanese swords, samurai, landscapes, carp, and deities picked out in gold, and silver blades engraved with various motifs of bamboo, grasses, and flowering plants, as well as birds and insects in flight.<sup>524</sup> In the American silver industry, the idea of assembling something such as a tea or coffee service from objects with varying decorations and shapes challenged Western sensibilities and was differentiated as matched in the Oriental style. This style is exemplified by Tiffany's mixed-metal coffee service of 1878, which retains only a semblance of a traditionally matched set, with design elements that repeat only in a significantly modified form from one piece to the next.<sup>525</sup> The idea of unmatched flatware was so abnormal to Victorian sensibilities that a child's set of flatware manufactured by Gorham, with each piece possessing different forms and decorations, was accompanied by a fitted case possessing a printed notice confirming that the pieces were indeed meant to be different from one another; they had, in other words, been "matched in the Japanese style."<sup>526</sup>

Even before the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, American silversmiths had begun to incorporate Japanese motifs into their designs. Edward C. Moore, Tiffany's designer from 1868 until his death, often traveled to Europe and is believed to have attended the 1862 International Exhibition in London; both Moore and John Gorham are believed to have attended the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 in Paris, where original Japanese works of art would have been experienced firsthand.<sup>527</sup> Designers would have had the opportunity to view illustrated publications chronicling the exposition entries, as well as to study examples of Japanese articles

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<sup>523</sup> Japanese *kozuka* are small knives with steel blades that can be fastened onto the sides of sword scabbards.

<sup>524</sup> Venable, 175-177.

<sup>525</sup> See Burke, 268.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>527</sup> John Loring, *Magnificent Tiffany Silver* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 24. Venable, 175.

in New York and Boston collections.<sup>528</sup> In addition, both Gorham and Tiffany held significant collections of authentic Japanese metalwork, amassed as early as 1869; these objects were imported both for sale and retention in the companies' design libraries.<sup>529</sup>

Both Gorham and Tiffany had extensive collections of Japanese art books in their libraries to be used as inspiration, such as Katsushika Hokusai's *Manga* (1814), and later acquired English and French sources, such as Meriden Britannia's *Art Worker* (1878) and Louis Gonse's *L'art japonais* (1883).<sup>530</sup> Art historian and editor of the *Gazette des beaux-arts*, Gonse (1846-1921) organized an exhibition of Japanese art in the Musée Japonais Temporaire in the rue de Sèze in 1883. The exhibition is credited with inspiring many Western collectors of Japanese art in both Europe and America, including those clients of Parisian connoisseur and dealer of Japanese *objets d'art* Siegfried Bing (1838-1905), who also had business liaisons with Tiffany and retailed the firm's work in Paris.<sup>531</sup> Similar to Dresser's *Development of Ornamental Art*, Gonse's chapters are devoted to various individual media, including metal work, a medium about which, the author believed, Europeans have the most to learn.<sup>532</sup> Gonse described the importance of swords and metallurgy in Japanese culture and refers to the smiths as "admirable masters," who "carried the work of inlaying and the use of colored metals to the highest degree of refinement."<sup>533</sup> Acknowledging the superiority of the Japanese artists, Gonse attests that Europeans would have no one worthy of comparing to even the "humblest artisan" in Japan.<sup>534</sup> As is common, however, some passages are disparaging, suggesting that talents are merely inherent rather than studied and mastered: "One soon wearies of the technical skill possessed by

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<sup>528</sup> Venable, 175.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Sigfried Wichmann, *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence in Western Art Since 1858* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 9.

<sup>532</sup> Louis Gonse, *L'art japonais*, 1883 (Reprint, Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 2009), 162.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid., 190.

the Japanese, so greatly does it seem among them a gift of nature; but one constantly experiences new pleasure in the study of the decoration. What tact, what grace!”<sup>535</sup> Gorse concludes his lengthy laudatory chapter in a moment of self-resignation, questioning “What more can I say? The uses of metal are unlimited...the Japanese chasers have executed... inexhaustible wonders of their dexterity.”<sup>536</sup> This glowing report of Japanese metalworking surely inspired the smiths at Gorham and Tiffany.

The next major world’s fair after the 1876 Centennial Exposition was the 1878 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, where Tiffany exhibited, but Gorham declined to participate, possibly due to the poor economy in the United States in the late 1870s.<sup>537</sup> It was in Paris that Tiffany first received recognition for works inspired by Japanese metalworking aesthetics. In Thomas R. Pickering’s *Paris Universal Exposition 1878: Official Catalogue of the United States Exhibitors*, the firm’s mixed-metal displays were listed, including “Encrusted work, Chromatic decoration of silver. Damascened work of Steel, Gold, Silver, and Copper. Hammered Silver decorated with alloys of various metals and their patinas. Mixed or laminated metals, consisting of Gold, Silver, Copper and their alloys.”<sup>538</sup> Upon seeing the firm’s display in Paris, Christopher Dresser enthusiastically wrote to Tiffany, exclaiming, “No silversmith...has made the progress in art as applied to their industry in the last few years...the rapidity of advancement has astonished...you occupy the proud position of being the first silversmith of the world.”<sup>539</sup>

Tiffany’s most stunning and important piece at the exposition was its *Conglomerate Vase* designed by Edward C. Moore, which figured significantly in their receipt of the *grand prix*

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>537</sup> Venable, 111.

<sup>538</sup> Thomas R. Pickering, *Paris Universal Exposition 1878: Official Catalogue of the United States Exhibitors* (London: Chiswick Press, 1878), 109.

<sup>539</sup> Christopher Dresser, personal correspondence to “Messrs. Tiffany and Co.,” July 25, 1878, Tiffany and Company Archives, Parsippany, New Jersey.

award for silver. This tour de force of metalwork included three asymmetrical bands of concentric, ovoid panels of *mokume gane* (often contemporaneously referred to as laminated metal) in gradated hues of golden red on each side of the vase's neck. Teeming with naturalistic Japanese motifs, the vase is adorned with seedpods, gourds, butterflies, dragonflies, vines, flowers, paulownia—the most popular motif on Japanese crests—and inlaid copper and niello Japanese maple leaves. Both European and Japanese critics alike hailed Tiffany's and Moore's success, as evidenced by Siegfried Bing's observation that the "provocative surprises" of American silver at the 1878 Paris Exposition drew their main design principles from the Japanese, but that "the borrowed elements were so ingeniously transposed to serve their new function as to become the equivalent of new discoveries."<sup>540</sup> Unlike Tiffany's 1876 exhibition in Philadelphia, where the Renaissance Revival style prevailed, the firm's 1878 Paris display was dominated by Anglo-Japanesque pieces. In addition to the first prize for work in silver, the firm's bold mixed-metal works won seven awards at the Exposition. A reporter for the *International Review* went so far as to say that Tiffany's new direction toward Japanese-inspired design was "the most important step in artistic metalwork taken by an American designer."<sup>541</sup>

Not only did Tiffany's display of Japanesque mixed metalwares completely change the nature of Western ideas of metalworking, but it also heralded that the American silver industry was well on its way to becoming the international leader of the field, as exclaimed by the London *Spectator*: "It will not suffice to study old models, however excellent, unless fresh inspiration be...wrought out by the skilful hand into forms of fresh and seemly designs.... We confess we were surprised and ashamed to find at the Paris Exhibition that a New York firm, Tiffany & Co.

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<sup>540</sup> Siegfried Bing, *La culture artistique en Amérique* (Évreux: Imprimerie de Charles Héssry, 1895), 75.

<sup>541</sup> "Silver in Art," *International Reviewer*, 5 (1878), 244.

had beaten out the old Country and the Old World in domestic silver.”<sup>542</sup> That the British, who had led the world in innovative silver designs and techniques for centuries, would express defeat is remarkable. Other reviewers saw the American silver firm’s innovative mixing of metal types and daring designs as revelatory, claiming, “These developments mark what may well be styled an American Renaissance which ignored the prevailing conventions of Europe.”<sup>543</sup> International admiration was manifested in the acquisition of Tiffany pieces for European museums in Vienna, Berlin, Stuttgart, and Dublin. Recognition of Tiffany’s triumph was also made by the originating country of the firm’s design inspiration. In an article entitled “Silver in Art” in the *International Review* of 1878, journalist Edwin C. Taylor states that Japanese officials “regarded with astonishment” Tiffany’s mixed-metal creations.<sup>544</sup> The praise afforded Japanese decorative arts was due to a number of competing and, at times, conflicting design inspirations. American stylistic critique initially focused on the presence of profuse ornament, as in J. S. Ingram’s comments: “There was no end to the variety of decorative ornament.”<sup>545</sup> Yet even though appreciation for Japan’s traditional design sense existed, there was uncertainty among Meiji artists during the initial years of the restoration, as they tried to fulfill the seemingly impossible mandate to preserve traditions while embracing innovations. This confusion led to the creation of art works that were often a curious hybrid between Eastern and Western aesthetics during exhibitions of the 1860s and 1870s, as was unfavorably noted by journalist Sir Henry Norman: “The Japanese soon fell into the notion that profusion of ornament, elaboration of detail and decorative brilliancy, were the first essentials of a successful appeal to Western approval.”<sup>546</sup> Whereas the pastiche of Japanese subject matter mixed with Western surfeit may have initially

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<sup>542</sup> Venable, 112-114.

<sup>543</sup> Edwin C. Taylor, “Metal Work of All Ages,” *National Repository*, 6 (November 1878), 404-405.

<sup>544</sup> Venable, 114.

<sup>545</sup> Ingram, 560.

<sup>546</sup> Impey, 24.

pleased foreign audiences, by the late 1870s, Americans and Europeans lamented that the generous incorporation of Western aesthetics was negatively affecting the virtues of what they deemed traditional Japanese craftsmanship. The French art critic Edmond Duranty regretted in 1879 that Japanese art, which had been simple, quiet and of a “delicate innocence,” had unfortunately become too close to the style of the French *École des Beaux Arts*.<sup>547</sup>

Ernest Fenollosa, who traveled to Japan in 1878 to teach political economy and philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, came to agree unreservedly with Dresser’s sentiments. Although Fenollosa arrived with no particular interest in the culture, he ultimately made a significant contribution to the preservation of traditional art in Japan and published the first history of East Asian art in English, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design*. He began collecting Japanese art and studying Japanese and Chinese art with the help of one of his students, Okakura Kakuzō.<sup>548</sup> Fenollosa and Okakura joined forces to become preeminent voices in the promotion of the country’s forgotten artistic legacy both nationally and internationally. In 1879 they were founding members of the Ryūchi-kai (Dragon Lake Society), an exclusive society devoted to preserving antiques, encouraging the Japanese people to rediscover and appreciate their cultural heritage, and promoting Japan’s traditional crafts in the face of pernicious foreign forces. Okakura would later dramatically write of these imperatives in *The Ideals of the East: The Spirit of Japanese Art*: “We await the flashing sword of the lightning which shall cleave the darkness. For...the raindrops of a new vigour must refresh the earth before new flowers can spring up...But it must be from Asia herself, along the ancient

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<sup>547</sup> Elisa Evett, *The Critical Reception of Japanese Art in Late Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982), 99.

<sup>548</sup> Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 126.

roadways of the race, that the great voice shall be heard. Victory from within, or a mighty death without.”<sup>549</sup>

In 1882, Fenollosa delivered an impassioned speech to members of the Ryūchi-kai, entitled, *The True Conception of the Fine Arts (Bijitsu shinsetsu)*, in which he unequivocally denounced the Westernization of the nation’s art, declaring: “Japanese art is really far superior to modern cheap Western art...forgetting the most important point, expression of an Idea...What a sad sight! The Japanese should return to their nature and its old racial traditions.”<sup>550</sup> Fenollosa and Okakura led the way to protect and safeguard traditional crafts and artistic styles, subsequently bringing about a nationwide initiative to identify, register, and preserve Japanese antiquities. In an effort to educate future Japanese artists, Fenollosa and Okakura were instrumental in establishing the Tokyo Bijutsu Gakkō (Tokyo School of Fine Arts) in 1899, at which Western techniques and styles were prohibited and native aesthetics were celebrated. In addition, three imperial museums were established in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Nara with departments of history, fine art, art industry, industry, and national products.<sup>551</sup> Collections included both antique and modern art, thus protecting Japan’s artistic heritage and promoting its future by displaying a wide range of artworks. As director of both the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the head of the Fine Art Department at the Imperial Museum in Tokyo, Okakura facilitated collaboration between the two institutions, striving not only for the perpetuation of traditional art, but also for a fusion of Japan’s past with its present that would be met with Western artistic appreciation, cultural respect, and mercantile interest.<sup>552</sup> Fenollosa returned to America in 1891

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<sup>549</sup> Okakura Kakuzō, *The Ideals of the East: The Spirit of Japanese Art*, 1903 (Reprint, New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 106.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

<sup>551</sup> Alice Y. Tseng, *The Imperial Museums of Meiji Japan: Architecture and the Art of the Nation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 91.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.



to serve as the first curator of Oriental Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where he would continue to spread his philosophy on Japanese art.

Buoyed by the initiative begun in the 1880s to protect Japan's artistic heritage from foreign invasion, which was galvanized by Ernest Fenollosa's 1882 speech, Meiji leaders reevaluated and changed the direction of artistic production.<sup>553</sup> The government instituted *koko rikon* (study the ancient and use the present), which was defined as the practical process of encouraging industry and enhancing productivity.<sup>554</sup> Fenollosa's speech resonated strongly with the Meiji government with its promise of increased economic gains through indigenous artistic production, rather than an ill-fated sellout to misperceived Western preferences: "Even though Japan exports raw silk, bronzes, ceramics, furniture, and carved wood pieces, revenues have not reached their full potential because designers and artisans do not know what Westerners want. What Westerners favor are the superb traditional arts of Japan, which have an exquisite beauty. There is an urgent need to provide artisans with masterful materials and the will to create good products."<sup>555</sup> Artists were advised to study ancient examples and traditional motifs and designs so that they could be incorporated into modern works, thus preserving and reviving the Japanese artistic culture rather than succumbing to a Westernized version.<sup>556</sup>

Written in 1882 after the designer's four-month journey to Japan, Christopher Dresser's *Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers* unquestionably reflected the designer's solidified belief that Japanese artists should avoid the prevailing trends of Westernization in an effort to maintain the purity of the indigenous aesthetic, as well as what Dresser perceived to be their inspiration and work ethic. Dresser's chapter on metalwork resumes a sometimes naïve and

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<sup>553</sup> Doi, 58.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid., 15.

belittling tone while simultaneously awarding high praise to Japanese metallurgy skills: “during the Middle Ages the various processes connected with the goldsmiths’ art, were so perfect that they have never been excelled.”<sup>557</sup> Dresser notes that “the traveler is astonished at the magnitude as well as the excellence of some of the metal castings” but kindly asks the reader to “bear in mind that they resulted from a national interest awakened by the priests.”<sup>558</sup> Whereas much metalwork was indeed created for religious purposes, this statement expresses the Western mindset that these artists simply waited to be told what to do and executed their craft without thought. Indeed Dresser believes that “for seven centuries the best art work of Japan was done under the conditions of rest and leisure enjoyed by artist working under baronial rule.”<sup>559</sup> However, the chapter goes on to praise the labor-intensive Japanese practice of creating a fresh model for every casting in order to create variety and avoid hackneyed copies. The designer admits that “it would take many printed pages to enumerate the excellences and specialties of Japanese metal-work; the task, therefore, must not be attempted,” but he continues in another paragraph, “The great charm in Japanese metal work...consists in the variety and delicacy, the poetical feeling, and at the same time the boldness displayed in it.”<sup>560</sup> Although Tiffany had garnered significant commendation for their mixed metalworks at the 1878 Paris Exposition, the chapter reminds the Western world that it is “certainly in the very infancy of our knowledge of metalworking...and the Japanese alone...express an understanding and knowledge of the materials greater than that of any European people.”<sup>561</sup>

American zoologist, author and art collector Edward S. Morse (1838-1925) visited Japan one year after Dresser to study coastal brachiopods, which in turn led to a post as the first

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<sup>557</sup> Dresser 1882, 415.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., 417.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 428.

Professor of Zoology at Tokyo Imperial University. Morse is known for his discovery of the Ōmori shell mound, the excavation of which advanced the study of archaeology and anthropology in Japan and significantly revealed the nature of prehistoric Japanese material culture. However, Morse also made a significant impact on America's familiarity and understanding of Japanese art through his collection of over five thousand pieces of Japanese ceramics, which he donated to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as well as the 1885 publication of *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings*. Falling in line with Fenollosa, Okakura, and Dresser, Morse appreciated Japanese aesthetics and ultimately railed against American Victorian excess. Earlier critics, such as Rutherford Alcock, had simply dismissed addressing the subject of Japanese structures and interior design, claiming that the nation and its people had none. Even Morse related that "at the outset...the bare rooms seem fruitless enough. At first sight these rooms appeared absolutely barren...one might well wonder in what way this people displayed their pretty objects for household decorations."<sup>562</sup>

Yet during Morse's three years in the country, his opinion shifted, and *Japanese Homes* goes far in displacing the Victorian notion of the tasteful and challenges the superiority of Western decorative arts, urging Westerners to "contrast our tastes...with those of the Japanese and perhaps profit by the lesson."<sup>563</sup> In considering American interiors, Morse states that Western rooms "seem to them [the Japanese] like a curiosity shop, and 'stuffy' to the last degree. Such a maze of vases, pictures, plaques, bronzes, with shelves, brackets, cabinets, and tables loaded with bric-a-brac, is quite enough to drive a Japanese frantic."<sup>564</sup> The late nineteenth-century belief that form should follow function and that objects should be used as intended was popularized by Eastlake, Cook, and Dresser, and is reinforced and reiterated by Morse. Specific

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<sup>562</sup> Edward S. Morse, *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings*, 1885 (Reprint, New York: Dover, 1961), 309.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

to metalwork, the author criticizes Americans whose “walls are hung with large fish-plates which were intended to hold food,” while praising the Japanese whose bronzes “are made to rest solidly on the floor” and properly used to display a “wealth of blossoms.”<sup>565</sup> Morse seems to be experiencing firsthand those ideals only written about nearly two decades ago in *Household Hints* by Eastlake, who Morse recognizes as “one who has done more than any other writer in calling attention...to violations of true taste...to arrive at better methods and truer principles in matters of taste.” Morse makes it clear, however, that the harmony that is found in Japanese interiors is not due to a lack of variety or combinations of interesting objects, which are indeed present, but displayed in a manner that is “refined to the last degree.”<sup>566</sup> Striking a similar note as the praise for the mixed metalworks of Tiffany and Gorham during this time, Morse notes that “nothing is more striking in a Japanese room than the harmonies and contrasts between the colors of the various objects.”<sup>567</sup> The author concedes that some English and American artists and decorators have achieved harmonious decorative effects; however, these accomplishments have been “strongly imbued by the Japanese spirit, and every success attained is a confirmation of the correctness of Japanese taste.”<sup>568</sup>

Both Tiffany and Gorham participated in the 1889 *Exposition Universelle* and both demonstrated that the “Japanese spirit” was alive and well in the American silver industry. The *Magazine of Art* admired Gorham’s mixed-metal ware and although cognizant of the original source of inspiration, credited the silver firm for innovative adaptation: “the influence of Eastern art, especially that of Japan, has been very apparent in Western design, and this has perhaps been more particularly so in America. It can be traced very distinctly in many of the Gorham

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<sup>565</sup> Ibid., 310

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 316.

<sup>568</sup> Ibid.

Company's patterns, but there is nothing slavish in the ready adoption of an idea."<sup>569</sup> A journalist for the *Jewelers' Circular-Keystone* said of Gorham's display "that it was impossible to see a greater variety of silver articles in the Paris Exhibition."<sup>570</sup> In response to the firm's exhibition, which included works inspired by Japanese, East Indian, and Saracenic styles, the reporter claimed that he "could go on almost indefinitely describing tea sets, punch bowls, tureens, pitchers, candelabra, flower vases, toilet sets, etc., all different in style and decoration."<sup>571</sup> Both firms received awards of excellence, and the *Jewelers' Weekly* deemed that the American companies "had been crowned victors by la belle France."<sup>572</sup>

Interim Japanese displays of metalwork leading up to the 1890s revealed a long-standing disconnect between an object's designer and the artists that actually made the object, which had begun with the Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha (First Trading and Manufacturing Company), a semi-private company charged with the export of Japanese wares. The company had adopted a process by which painters—with little consideration for or experience with the intended media of the work—created most of the designs for all media, thus creating a "house style" that permeated their production unaltered until their output was deemed so outmoded that the objects were unmarketable.<sup>573</sup> Still extant are over 2,000 *shitae*, or design drawings, commissioned by the company from artists for a variety of decorative arts media.<sup>574</sup> Many of these designs were created by Nihonga artists. Nihonga (literally "Japanese-style paintings") is a type of Japanese painting style adherent to traditional Japanese artistic characteristics, techniques and materials,

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<sup>569</sup> A. St. Johnson, "American Silver-Work," *Magazine of Art*, 9 (1886), 16.

<sup>570</sup> "Glimpses of the Exposition," *Jeweler's Circular-Keystone*, 20:9 (July 1889), 29.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.* What can be loosely considered to be Saracenic style to Western designers incorporates elements of Islamic architecture, including profusely decorated surfaces, bulbous domes, and horseshoe, pointed, and multi-lobed arches.

<sup>572</sup> "The Exposition Awards," *Jewelers Weekly*, 8:24 (10 October 1889), cover story; cited in Venable, 135.

<sup>573</sup> Oliver Impey, et al., *Meiji no takara = Treasures of Imperial Japan: Metalwork, Vol. I.* (London: Kibo Foundation, 1995), 38.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*

and thus different from Western-style painting, or Yōga, which was also employed during the era. The Nihonga artists were initially appreciative to have Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha's business, yet when their paintings became more popular, they abandoned the design work, leaving decorative artists in an unfortunate predicament as many had become so dependent on the painters' work that they had become incapable of producing viable designs.<sup>575</sup> The Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha stores that had opened in New York and Paris in 1876 and 1878 had already closed, and in 1891 the company was bankrupt and dismantled.

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago was a particularly pivotal fair for Japan with conflicting results; the country would at once receive long-awaited international recognition and arrive abruptly at the end of its reign of stylistic dominance. In the spirit of the duality of this turn of events, Okakura would later write in *The Awakening of Japan*: "The world may, perhaps, laugh at our love of monotony, but...our individuality has been preserved from submersion beneath the mighty tide of Western ideas by the same national characteristics which ever enabled us to remain true to ourselves in spite of repeated influxes of foreign thought."<sup>576</sup>

In response to the American silver firms' showing at the Columbian Exposition, some critics questioned the trajectory of the industry's development. With regard to stylistic sources, an American journalist commented "In America...he [the smith] is ever on the lookout, not only among the archaeological dust-heaps of the centuries, but in the world of science of to-day, and the almost newly-discovered world of still living Oriental art."<sup>577</sup> Although a rather demeaning comment, it reflects the myriad design stimuli still being culled by American silver firms for inspiration, including those of Asia. But by the mid-1890s, the popularity of mixed metalwork

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<sup>575</sup> Doi, 91.

<sup>576</sup> Okakura Kakuzō, *The Awakening of Japan* 1905 (Reprint, South Carolina: Forgotten Books, 2009), 187.

<sup>577</sup> Howard Townsend, "American Silverwork," *American Architect and Building News* 41:915 (8 July 1893), 27; cited in Venable, 163.

was losing momentum and was temporarily supplanted by a nationalistic beaux-arts style, which had emerged at the Columbian Exposition. For the Japanese, the victories won at the 1893 Columbian Exposition would not be repeated at the 1900 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, where officials embraced the Western canonical concept that artificially divided fine and decorative art into separate categories. In addition, criticism was leveled at the Japanese decorative arts for lacking any trace of the Art Nouveau style that had emerged as the prevalent style.<sup>578</sup> American silversmiths had embraced the Art Nouveau style by the 1900 Exposition as evidenced by Gorham's highly successful *Martelé* line, which was informed by the style's sinuous lines.<sup>579</sup>

Serving as a vehicle for the Meiji government to advance their technological and industrial capabilities, in addition to commercial enterprises, the international expositions held during the latter half of the nineteenth century proved to be fertile ground for Japan to gain international clout by exhibiting traditional art forms. Western audiences simultaneously embraced, belittled, praised, misunderstood, and condemned various types of modern and antique Japanese art, as evidenced by the myriad range of contemporary critiques and consumer patterns. As Japan transitioned from the Edo period to the Meiji era, exposure to Western ideas of the concept of art and categorical designations thereof often opposed the Japanese legacy of regarding all art forms as worthy, regardless of media. Japanese metalwork artists struggled with respecting their artistic heritage while endeavoring to embrace innovation, just as American silversmiths labored to establish their own aesthetic legacy in the midst of European artistic hegemony. These challenges, however, became the basis of a discourse responsible for the ongoing development of a national art in both America and Japan in the twentieth century that concurrently honored the past and looked to the future.

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<sup>578</sup> Earle, 218.

<sup>579</sup> For images of Gorham Martelé silver, see L. J. Pristo, *Martelé: Gorham's Nouveau Art Silver* (Phoenix, Arizona: Phoenix Publishing Group, 2002).

## Epilogue: Stylistic Transition at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition: Japanesque Design Gives Way to a Classicized Interlude

Backed by more than twenty years of imperial support and governmental sponsorship, Japan was represented at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago by 1,750 tons of the best of the Meiji era's artistic output, which was distributed throughout nine buildings, comprising more than 144,000 square feet.<sup>580</sup> Tateno Gōzō, the Japanese minister in Washington, D.C., hoped that Japan's Chicago showing would warrant the country "full fellowship in the family of nations, no longer deserving to labor under the incubus which circumstances forced upon her."<sup>581</sup> Seemingly answering the minister's anticipations, Trumbull White's *The World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. A Complete History of the Enterprise* proclaims: "It is doubtful if any country can show in its history such a rapid advance in all things that make civilization...in the last quarter century...the forward movement of the Island Empire has been so rapid that she asks no favor of anyone, but only fair treatment."<sup>582</sup> Maintaining an American perspective with an undertone of ascendancy, the author notes that the "United States opened the doors of Japan to the world," and claims that Japan possesses "more kindly feelings toward the American nation than toward any other in the world," and concludes

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<sup>580</sup> Ellen P. Conant, *Challenging Past and Present: The Metamorphosis of Nineteenth-Century Japanese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 260. Japan was allotted 40,000 sq. ft. for a national pavilion; 40,000 sq. ft. in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building; 4,000 sq. ft. in the Horticultural Building; 2,850 sq. ft. in the Palace of Fine Arts; 1,800 sq. ft. in the Mines and Mining Building; 1,400 sq. ft. in the Fish and Fisheries Building; 950 sq. ft. in the Forestry Building; 50,000 sq. ft. on the Midway Plaisance; 3,000 sq. ft. for a teahouse; and smaller spaces in the Agricultural Building, Transportation Building, Women's Building, Children's Building and the Anthropological Building.

<sup>581</sup> Tateno Gōzō, "Foreign Nations at the World's Fair: Japan," *North American Review* (156, January 1893); cited in Conant, 258. Tateno was speaking of the existing unfair trade agreements between Japan and foreign countries.

<sup>582</sup> Trumbull White, William Ingleheart and George R Davis, *The World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893. A Complete History of the Enterprise; a Full Description of the Buildings and Exhibits in All Departments* (Philadelphia: J. H. Moore, 1893), 299.



that “Western Europe has found it necessary to be very industrious in the effort to excel...when Japan is the competitor.”<sup>583</sup>

Whereas the crowning glory of Japan’s exhibition structures was the recreation of the *Hōōdō* (Phoenix Hall) from the Byōdōin in Uji, the seventh largest building at the fair and the only one situated on the Wooded Island in Lake Michigan, the crowning achievement for Japan was being the only Asian nation granted coveted space in the Palace of Fine Arts.<sup>584</sup> Heretofore, Japanese exposition entries were not allowed to be shown in the fine arts section, and works earning awards had mainly been in the decorative arts category, with little attention focused on two-dimensional artwork. Underscoring Japan’s increased international diplomatic powers, the Japanese government successfully negotiated to display entries, including decorative arts, sculpture, and paintings, within the fine arts category, as well as the crafts section. Trumbull, observing Japan’s coup as part of his 628-page volume, elucidates: “Japan, whose people never made a display in the art section of an exposition before, gives one of the most unique displays in Chicago...one of the richest displays ever made.”<sup>585</sup>

Not only did Japan gain exhibition access in the Fine Arts Building, but it also deftly managed to double its original square footage allotment there during the fair.<sup>586</sup> A reporter for the *Kyōto bijutsu kyōkai zasshi* (Bulletin of Kyoto Bijutsu Kyokai) expressed the discrimination that the Japanese had felt from Western prejudices: “It is not that our nation has no art (*bijutsu*), but that Europeans and Americans operate from the bias that outside of [their] oil paintings and

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<sup>583</sup> Ibid., 544.

<sup>584</sup> Neil Harris, “All the World a Melting Pot? Japan at American Fairs, 1876-1904,” in *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, edited by Akira Iriye (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 37-40; Joe Earle, *Splendors of the Meiji: Treasures of Imperial Japan* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Broughton International Inc., 1999), 215.

<sup>585</sup> White, 362, 544.

<sup>586</sup> Earle, 215.

sculpture there is no art in other parts of the world.”<sup>587</sup> The inclusion of the Japanese word “*bijutsu*” is significant, as no word for “fine arts” existed in the Japanese language until the 1873 Vienna Exhibition.<sup>588</sup> The Japanese did not recognize the West’s artificial construct of a difference between “decorative” and “fine” art, which resulted in some of their *byōbu* (painted folding screens) being categorized as “household goods” at exhibitions.<sup>589</sup> The reporter continued, “But this time at the request of our representatives at the Chicago exposition, they have made the special exception for our nation to expand their categories so that Japanese artworks could be exhibited at an international exposition for the first time.”<sup>590</sup> Some American critics and reporters were sympathetic to the problematic categorization method, acknowledging that “in the case of Japan, the usual classification of painting, sculpture, architecture, and engraving had to be abandoned. Her art is too unlike our own to be listed in the same manner,” while admitting with regard to the existing distinctions, “we should not forget that with us it is largely artificial.”<sup>591</sup> Somewhat succumbing to Western conceits regarding the definition of “fine arts,” traditional “craft” mediums, such as cloisonné and metalwork, were formed as flat panels and then framed and hung like paintings. Displayed in the Palace of Fine Arts, Namikawa Sōsuke’s *Mount Fuji* framed cloisonné panel received high praise, although the Japanese

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<sup>587</sup> Miscellanea in the *Kyōto bijutsu kōkai zasshi* 3 (August 1892); cited in Alice Y. Tseng, *The Imperial Museums of Meiji Japan: Architecture and the Art of the Nation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 176.

<sup>588</sup> Doi, et al., *Japan Goes to the World’s Fairs: Japanese Art in the Great Expositions in Europe and the United States 1867-1904* (Tokyo: NHK and NHK Promotions Co., Ltd. in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Tokyo National Museum, 2005), 74.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Tseng, 176.

<sup>591</sup> John J. Flinn, *Official Guide to the World’s Columbian Exposition in the city of Chicago, State of Illinois, May 1-October 26, 1893* (Chicago: Columbian Guide Company, 1893), 64; cited in Hannah Sigur, *The Influence of Japanese Art on Design* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2008), 53. “Applied Arts at the World’s Fair: Germany, England, The United States, Italy, Denmark, Japan,” *The Art Amateur: A Monthly Journal Devoted to Art in the Household* 31 (December 1893); cited in Sigur, 53.

exposition report observed that “many of the viewers did not realize that it was made of cloisonné.”<sup>592</sup>

Of works shown in the Palace of Fine Arts, Japan won sixteen awards in decorative arts, as well as twenty-two for paintings and nine for sculptures.<sup>593</sup> Out of the 118 Japanese pieces shown in the Palace of Fine Arts, 40 percent received awards; Japan had achieved the highest success rate of all exhibiting countries in the Palace of Fine Arts at its Chicago debut.<sup>594</sup>

Whereas the Columbian Exposition delivered long-sought artistic recognition to Japan, it simultaneously brought bittersweet consequences to the high-ranking status and dominating stylistic impact of Japanese metalwork in the Western world. With continued prominence, large-scale bronze sculptures were the first works of art greeting fairgoers at the entrance to the Japanese exhibition in the Palace of the Fine Arts in Chicago, where an over-seven-and-a-half-foot tall bronze eagle dominated the display of decorative arts objects.<sup>595</sup> At the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, a myriad of bronzes arrested attendees’ attention in the Japanese section, with a magnificent thirteen-and-a-half-foot tall bronze incense burner cast by Hayashi Harusada reigning over all.<sup>596</sup> Striking naturalistic renditions of immense avian studies, such as the eagle, Otake Norikuni’s *Cockerel*, and Suzuki Chōkichi’s *Twelve Bronze Falcons*, depicting

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<sup>592</sup> *Rinji Hakurankai Jimukyoku Hōkoku* (May 1895); cited in Doi, 82. For image of Namikawa Sōsuke’s *Mount Fuji* framed cloisonné panel see Doi, 75.

<sup>593</sup> Doi, 78.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid.

<sup>595</sup> Harris, 37-40.

<sup>596</sup> Earle (1999), 238-9. Although there is no mention of its maker, Hayashi Harusada, in Meiji-era exhibition records from Japan, Europe or America, an illustration of what appears to be an artist’s rendering of this, or an extremely similar, incense burner has been discovered in *The Graphic History of the Fair, Containing a Sketch of International Expositions, A Review of Events Leading to the Discovery of America, and a History of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Held in the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, May 1 to October 31, 1893* (Chicago, 1894), 146. For an image of Hayashi Harusada’s incense burner see Earle, 1999, 238.

a series of individualized bronze birds, were deemed “among the most celebrated exhibits at the exposition.”<sup>597</sup>

Notwithstanding the praise and progress associated with the Japanese exhibitions, as well as the 1,073 total prizes awarded to decorative arts, only twenty-five percent of these objects sold and less than one-tenth of the estimated ten million yen exhibition investment was realized.<sup>598</sup>

Undaunted, Ernest F. Fenollosa applauded “those works which had the pure oriental quality,” and averred that the success in Chicago should “strengthen the hand of those brave few, artists and leaders, who have battled for years for self-development in art.”<sup>599</sup>

The forty thousand square-foot recreated *Hōōdō* (Phoenix Hall), nestled on Wooded Island, displayed Japan’s history to the world with the north section representing the Heian period (794-1185), the south section representing the Muromachi period (1392-1573) and the center section representing the Edo period (1615-1868). During the planning of the country’s Chicago exhibition, the *Hakurankai Jimukyoku* (Exhibition Bureau) stressed that “the most important object when participating in foreign exhibitions is to bring honour to our country and promote trade. In order to achieve this objective, we must have many visitors coming to see the venue.”<sup>600</sup> To that end, it was determined that past world’s fair exhibitions designed in a European style in order to “avoid being included with underdeveloped nations...only resulted in being sandwiched between European powers.”<sup>601</sup> Plans for the 1893 Columbian Exposition followed a new tack: “In future foreign exhibitions a traditional Japanese building should be

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<sup>597</sup> Ibid. For image of Otake Norikuni’s *Cockerel* see Earle, 1999, 242; for image of Suzuki Chōkichi’s *Twelve Bronze Falcons* see Doi, 80

<sup>598</sup> Doi, 86; Conant (2006), 262. Conant notes that the “meagerness of sales from many of the Japanese exhibits was exacerbated by fluctuations in American money markets.”

<sup>599</sup> Conant (2006), 272.

<sup>600</sup> Noshomusho, *Futsukoku Pari Bankoku Dai Hakurankai hōkokusho* (1889), 100-7; cited in Gregory Irvine, *Japonisme and the Rise of the Modern Art Movement: The Arts of the Meiji Period* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 76.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid.

constructed for the display room.”<sup>602</sup> Further strategy stated that only “exquisite art works” would be displayed and that “miscellaneous goods and trinkets aiming only for sale should not be displayed in the same area and...placed in a separate building.”<sup>603</sup>

Underscoring the Japanese rejection of the artificial construct of a distinction of merit between “fine” and “applied” arts, Okakura Tenshin, first director of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and one of the head Japanese officials in charge of the Chicago exhibition, recruited students from the Tokyo School of Fine Arts to paint works on the interior walls of Phoenix Hall within which various decorative arts were displayed. This arrangement signified the irrationality of the dubious division and hierarchal distinctions between types of art, and demonstrated the harmonious results of displaying all artistic media together as a unified whole rather than in scattered fabricated categories.

Japanese landscaping around the Phoenix Hall completed the presentation; critics proclaimed that “the Wooded Island is a triumph...gardeners of that country [Japan] have used their best effort and have produced a delightful result.”<sup>604</sup> And yet the juxtaposition of the massive 211-foot-tall Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building in the classical style looming over Japan’s historic Phoenix Hall, as shown in a contemporary photograph from Hubert Howe Bancroft’s *The Book of the Fair*, portended the ultimate demise of the American Aesthetic Movement.<sup>605</sup>

With unifying classical architectural orders of sixty-foot high arches, the architectural style of the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building, as well as the majority of structures, was

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

<sup>604</sup> Trumbull, 203.

<sup>605</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair: An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the World’s Science, Art and Industry, as Viewed Through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893*; cited in Earle, 213. For image see Earle, 1999, 213.

officially called “Neo-classical Florentine,” also known as Beaux Arts, an academic neoclassical architectural style taught at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. The Beaux-Arts style heavily influenced the architecture of the United States in the period from 1880 to 1920, and the apogee of the movement was realized at the World's Columbian Exposition. Also known as “The White City,” the massed pavilions of the fair were formed of iron and steel infrastructure and coated with white “staff,” a mixture of plaster and cement meant to resemble the white marble edifices of ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>606</sup> Designed by New York architect George Post, who was trained in the Beaux-Arts tradition, the 136,000 square-foot Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building dominated the fair’s landscape and heralded the return to classical roots.

The revival of classical style was carried from the exterior of the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building to the interiors, where the 3,770 square-foot neoclassical pavilion designed by New York architect John DuFais for Tiffany and Gorham was prominently located at the corner of the building’s main thoroughfares, Columbia and Isabella Avenues.<sup>607</sup> An homage to classical orders and ornament, the silver firms’ pavilion featured expansive arched windows, fluted Doric columns, and was anchored by a marble and parcel-gilt faux finish Doric column that rose one hundred feet in the air to serve as a perch for a gilded American eagle with a ten-foot wingspan, who balanced on a terrestrial globe, measuring six feet in diameter.<sup>608</sup> A report by the Ministry of Commerce commends Gorham and Tiffany, who bore the entire cost of the pavilion as the United States government provided no underwriting for their achievement: “The entrance to the American section in the center of the Manufactures Building was a tribute to the public spirit and enterprise of three New York firms, Tiffany & Co., Gorham Manufacturing

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<sup>606</sup> For a description of plaster relief work and its use at World’s Fair venues, see George Perry Grimsley, *The Gypsum of Michigan and the Plaster Industry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1904), 219-20.

<sup>607</sup> John M. Blades and John Loring, *Tiffany at the World’s Columbian Exposition* (Palm Beach, Florida: Henry Morrison Flagler Museum, 2006), 30.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*

Company and the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company. They assumed the responsibility of erecting a pavilion which would worthily represent the United States.”<sup>609</sup> Neoclassical detailing carried through the elaborate interior of the silver companies’ pavilion, with arched colonnades, paneled ceilings and lunettes surmounted by medallions painted by Charles F. Naegele, each depicting a celebrated artist or designer such as Paul Revere, John Flaxman, Michelangelo, and Albrecht Dürer.<sup>610</sup> Japanese inspiration had been replaced by the stalwarts of Western art and glass cases on baluster-column legs held painstakingly-wrought works celebrating America, its founding and its traditions.

Tiffany exhibited around a million dollars’ worth of silverware and jewelry in Chicago, including nearly five hundred silver objects that reflected the taste of the firm’s new director of jewelry design, Paulding Farnham, and the new director of silver design, John. T. Curran, who had taken over in 1891, following the death of Edward C. Moore. The company had moved away from Moore’s exotic amalgamations of Eastern design, especially the Japanesque model, a tactically astute decision that yielded the firm more than fifty-six Exposition awards and prizes.<sup>611</sup> Hailed by the editor of the *New York Sun* as “one of the most remarkable specimens of the silversmith...that has ever been produced anywhere,” Curran’s *Magnolia Vase* of silver, gold, enamel and opals stood thirty-one inches tall, weighed sixty-five pounds, and was said in the Tiffany exhibition catalog to be “suggested by a piece of pottery found among the relics of the ancient cliff-dwellers of the New Mexican Pueblos.”<sup>612</sup> Paulding Farnham created the drawing depicting the magnolias enameled in relief in soft hues of cream, rose, peach, and green.

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<sup>609</sup> M. Camille Krantz, *International Exposition of Chicago, 1893* (Paris: National Press, 1894), 85; translated, typescript copy in Gorham Archives, I. Gorham Historical, 5. Articles about Gorham, c. Exhibitions, Archives of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

<sup>610</sup> Charles Venable, *Silver in America 1840-1940: A Century of Splendor* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 116.

<sup>611</sup> Blades, 36.

<sup>612</sup> Blades, 90.

Priced at ten thousand dollars, the vase's decorations represented the natural bounty of America: high-relief and chased silver cacti for the desert region, chased and gilded pine cones and needles for the north and east, enameled magnolias for the mid-south and west, and goldenrod, which grows in all areas of the country, rendered in relief of pure gold with roots that encircled four large opals at the vase's base.<sup>613</sup> In the same vein, Tiffany silver-plate designer Frank Shaw chased a detailed profusion of indigenous plants on every surface of a tilt-top table completely encased in silvered copper. Known as Tiffany's *Flora* style, the table's decoration was exuberantly pronounced by the *Jeweler's Review* as a "battle of... American flora, in which battalions of roses, vines, buds, [and] ferns... scattered all over the field."<sup>614</sup>

Leaving no doubt as to the focus of the Chicago Exposition, Gorham produced a six-foot tall, solid cast silver statue of Christopher Columbus by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904), sculptor of the Statue of Liberty, reflecting the Exposition's theme of the commemoration of the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America. Weighing in at over 1.2 tons, *Columbus* was recognized as the largest silver sculpture ever made. A French critic described the figure's pose as "noble, and the gesture of the great navigator is altogether that of the man of genius pointing the way which will open to the world a new path for human activity."<sup>615</sup>

Under the leadership of William Christmas Codman, hired as chief designer in 1891 to succeed George Wilkinson, Gorham's style had taken a new path that was decidedly academic in nature. The company's showing in Chicago comprised bold, costly, and historicized designs, incorporating elaborate chasing, generous inclusion of enamelwork, and blown glass or cut crystal vessels with ornate silver mounts. An Englishman known for his ecclesiastical works, as

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<sup>613</sup> The *Magnolia Vase* was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1899, accession no. 99.2.

<sup>614</sup> Jason T. Busch and Catherine L. Futter, *Inventing the Modern World: Decorative Arts at the World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2012), 156-7.

<sup>615</sup> Krantz, 85. The *Columbus* statue weighed 36,000 troy ounces, which converts to 2,468 pounds. The statue was melted down sometime in the twentieth century; bronze casts of the figure were produced.



well as Victorian furniture, Codman was not associated with the English Aesthetic Movement or seemingly an adherent to the impact of Japanese art on Western design.<sup>616</sup> One of Codman's most extravagant creations for the 1893 Exposition was the *Nautilus Centerpiece*, a look back to Renaissance examples of large shells mounted in precious metals. Conceived as a yachting trophy, the work combined silver, shell, pearls, and semiprecious stones into a base of four gilt shells, one containing the head of Neptune bearing a figure of Venus, who holds the jewel-encrusted nautilus shell crowned by Nike, celebrating America's victorious showing at the Exposition.<sup>617</sup>

Gorham earned fifty-five awards for their Beaux-Arts creations. The French Ministry of Commerce Report of 1894 astutely observed of Gorham and Tiffany, that the "two great American Silversmiths have very different styles," and noted that Tiffany is a "silversmith-jeweler, with whom silver is only a pretext for jewels and enamel work," while "Gorham is the silversmith proper." Further adeptly assessing Gorham's successful business model, the report credits mechanical processes and equipment as the means by which the company "throws every day on the American market, millions of table services," but also recognizes that "at the same time he [Gorham] is able to produce artistic and decorative work, calling for the highest skill and careful hand labor."<sup>618</sup>

Both the celebration of revived classicism in American silver and Japan's success at the 1893 Columbian Exposition were to be short-lived, for at the 1900 Paris *Exposition Universelle*, French officials strictly adhered to traditional divisions between fine arts and decorative arts, thus allowing only Japanese Yōga (Western style) oil paintings, Nihonga watercolors, and

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<sup>616</sup> Charles Carpenter, *Gorham Silver 1831-1981* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1982), 206.

<sup>617</sup> The *Nautilus Centerpiece* is in the collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, accession no. 1990.176. For an image see Venable, 117.

<sup>618</sup> Krantz, 85.

sculpture to be shown as fine arts.<sup>619</sup> Although Yōga painters were well represented in Paris, they were viewed as “demeaning and deleterious,” and Nihonga works were dismissed as well.<sup>620</sup> Even Yōga painter Asai Chū (1856-1907) admitted that the Japanese submissions were “quite outshone. I was very embarrassed to stand before the Japanese works...it made me wretched.”<sup>621</sup> The decorative arts fared no better, ceramics were severely criticized and the ōsuma ceramics of Miyagawa Kōzan (1842-1916) that had been so admired in previous exhibitions were deemed old fashioned.<sup>622</sup> Many of the decorative arts criticisms were a result of the absence of any elements of the Art Nouveau style that was so fashionable at the time.<sup>623</sup> Ironically, the Art Nouveau style was a European derivative of Japanese style to a large degree, yet Japan’s decision to eschew this particular European style ended up as a “critical failure” in Paris.<sup>624</sup>

In contrast, the Art Nouveau style was shown in great quantity and with much success at the 1900 Paris Exposition by American silver firms, such as Gorham, Reed and Barton, and Tiffany.<sup>625</sup> Although Tiffany also continued to exhibit works inspired by cultural aesthetics, including American Indian, Viking, Byzantine, and Celtic, over half of Gorham’s 303 individual entries were in the firm’s *Martelé* style. Referencing the hand-hammered finish of the silver, the line’s name derives from the French verb “*marteler*” (to hammer). This visual evidence of the hand of the silversmith, along with Art Nouveau’s curvaceous undulating forms and decorations,

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<sup>619</sup> Earle, 218; Doi, 91.

<sup>620</sup> Conant (1995), 85.

<sup>621</sup> Quoted in Maekawa Masahide, *Asai Chū*, vol. 26, *Shinchō Nihon bijutsu bunko* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997), 79; cited in Christine M. E. Guth, *Japan & Paris: Impressionism, Postimpressionism and the Modern Era* (Honolulu: Honolulu Academy of Arts, 2004), 64.

<sup>622</sup> Oliver Impey and Malcom Fairly, *Treasures of Imperial Japan: Ceramics from the Khalili Collection* (London: Kibo Foundation in association with the National Museum of Wales, 1994), 12; Felice Fischer, *The Art of Japanese Craft: 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>623</sup> Earle, 218.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid.

<sup>625</sup> Venable, 253.

were enhanced by the company's use of .950 fine silver, which was more malleable than .925 sterling silver.<sup>626</sup> Although Codman had begun to design in the Art Nouveau style just a year after the Chicago Exposition, the first official piece of *Martelé* produced was a three-handled loving cup, which was entered into the *Makers and Finished Weights* ledger on November 21, 1896.<sup>627</sup>

*Martelé* was especially challenging to produce and required designers possessing the adroit ability to adapt two-dimensional drawings into three-dimensional realizations, a feat often requiring an insightful reading of sketchy renderings. To facilitate the demanding process of *Martelé's* production, William Codman formed a special training school at Gorham in 1896 for silversmiths, who were able to produce a quantity of *Martelé* substantial enough to show first at the Boston Arts and Crafts Exhibition in April 1897 and again at the Waldorf Hotel in New York, to which the press were given a private preview.<sup>628</sup> A review by the *Jeweler's Circular* titled "Rare and Unique Exhibit of Works of Hand Wrought Silver" underscores the challenge of transforming the design into the physical form: "While the designs are generally from one man, W. C. Codman...the articles themselves were wrought under his direction by different skilled silver workers, and show to a considerable extent the individuality of the makers."<sup>629</sup>

Gorham chose the Paris 1900 Exposition as the official international launch for its Art Nouveau *Martelé* line, and achieved sweeping success. The centerpiece of *Martelé's* debut was a solid silver dressing table and stool wrought from seventy-eight pounds of silver over the course of twenty-three hundred hours of labor.<sup>630</sup> Codman was awarded the Silver Medal and the Gold Medal, Gorham President Edward Holbrook was made a Chevalier of the French Legion of

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<sup>626</sup> For images of Gorham's *Martelé* line see Veneale, 255-59.

<sup>627</sup> L. J. Pristo, *Martelé: Gorham's Nouveau Art Silver* (Phoenix, Arizona: Phoenix Publishing Group, 2002), 53.

<sup>628</sup> Carpenter, 233.

<sup>629</sup> "Rare and Unique Exhibit of Hand Wrought Silver," *Jewelers' Circular*, November 17, 1897.

<sup>630</sup> For image of Gorham's dressing table see Venable, 256.

Honor, and the Gorham Manufacturing Company secured the *grand prix* for metalwork.<sup>631</sup> A comparison of American silver companies' displays and those of the Japanese may have afforded no discernable connections to the casual observer at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition or the 1900 *Exposition Universelle*. Mixed metal works of oxidized patinas and Japanesque appliqués inspired by the likes of Katsushika Hokusai were clearly absent, forgotten during a dutiful return to the redoubtable canon of Western art, which was manifestly revealed in Chicago and resolutely revised in Paris, with the arrival of art termed as that of the new. And yet it is impossible to imagine the sinuous ornament and forms of American Art Nouveau silver without the American Aesthetic Movement's earlier abandonment of classic design decrees for the all-encompassing embrace of Japanesque aesthetic innovations. The beauty of Japanese mixed metalwork encouraged imitative reproductions in America, yet, more significantly, the ingenuity of traditional Japanese metalwork inspired the silversmiths of Tiffany and Gorham to develop a distinctly American realization of Japan's technically challenging processes, producing aesthetically striking results of international hybridity. Equally impossible to conceive would be the international position and critical assessment of Japanese artists and designers in the early twentieth century, without the unequivocal impact of the country's aesthetics on the Western world, especially America. The predominant role of the Japanese metalworker entering a national phase of flux and the international rise of the American silversmith burgeoning beyond its borders in the late nineteenth century converged to produce not only an explosion of innovative design, technology, and industry for both countries, but also an exponential expansion of an admiring international audience, boldly willing to cast aside past traditions, constraints, and biases. A new design was cast, indefinitely and concomitantly altering and transforming the American silver industry and Japanese Meiji metalworkers.

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<sup>631</sup> Pristo, 53.

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