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The Impact of Japonisme on European Art and Painting in the Late 19th Century: Characteristics of Cultural Exchange During the Rise Of European Imperialism

Since the opening of Japan to trade with the West, a cult of Japanese aesthetics in the art and design has been created in Europe. Japonisme exerted a remarkable influence on the emergence of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, including a recognizable individual influence on key artists within those movements. Motifs, technique, composition, colors were directly borrowed from Japanese art, especially woodcats (ukiyo-e). Japonisme also influenced some later movements in painting and design, but Impressionism and Post-Impressionism represented the initial turning point. Only by considering the imperial expansion of Europe is possible to understand the essential components of that transmission, which requires not only art criticism, but rather, in its complexity, significantly overflows into the field of social critique and anthropology of art. The aim of this study is to trace the pathways and networks of exchange and power that facilitated the spread of Japonisme in Europe – to show how elements of Japanese culture were adopted, assimilated, and to what extent the inventions and originality of new styles and the establishment of new aesthetic standards relied on the dominant position of European culture, which could appropriate elements from other cultures. The study highlights how this transfer was marked by an exotic and Orientalist vision of Japan in Europe and examines the reception of the exoticization of Japan within Japan itself.

Key words: Japonisme, Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Imperialism, Orientalism.

Утицај јапанизма на европску уметност и сликарство крајем XIX века: обележја културне размене у времену успона европског империјализма

Од момента отварања Јапана за трговину са Западом, у Европи је створен култ јапанске естетике у сфери уметности и дизајна. Јапанизам је извршио изузетан утицај на настанак импресионизма и постимпресионизма, укључујући и препознатљив појединачни утицај на кључне уметнике унутар тих праваца. Мотиви, технике, композиција, боје, директно су позајмљивани из јапанске уметности, а посебно јапанске графике (*ukiyo-e*). Јапанизам је извршио утицај и на неке касније правце у сликарству и дизајну, али импресионизам и постимпресионизам су представљали иницијални заокрет. Тек узимањем у обзир империјалног ширења Европе могуће је разумети битне компоненте тог преноса, те се он не исцрпљује у пољу уметничке критике, већ се у својој комплексности битно прелива у поље друштвене критике и антропологије уметности. Циљ овог рада је да укаже којим путевима и кроз какве мреже размене и односа моћи је омогућено ширење јапанизма у Европи – како су елементи јапанске културе усвајани, асимиловани и колико је инвентивност и оригиналност нових стилова и успостављање нових естетских стандарда било ослоњено на доминантну позицију европске културе која је могла да присваја елементе других култура. Рад осветљава колико је тај пренос био обележен егзотичком и оријенталистичком визуром Јапана у Европи, те каква је била рецепција егзотизације Јапана у самом Јапану.

Кључне речи: јапанизам, импресионизам, постимпресионизам, империјализам, оријентализам

Many pieces of art from the past were created as a result of collective effort of apprentices and masters in their workshops. For example, during the Renaissance, the intertwining of ideas of artisan and artist, craft and art, was more the rule than the exception. Personal style or authorship was important, but it encompassed not only the artists themselves but also

the figure of a powerful patron interested in commissioning artwork from multiple contenders, competitions among masters for patrons, and subsequently the discovery and application of specific painting techniques and motifs that would then mark the entire period. While we undoubtedly remember the Renaissance for its genius artists, each of them individually gained fame as much as an artisan, inspired by new collective creativity that characterized the entire epoch.

In his text "What is an Author?" Foucault explains that the concept of authorship is a socially constructed and historically variable notion, with different weight and significance across epochs, ultimately concluding that authorship is fundamentally an ideological concept. While primarily addressing textual authorship, it includes non-discursive practices too, wherein authorship is also dissected into multiple actors and power relations among them. With regard to this, understanding authorship solely through the individual and their artistic genius reflects a more recent epoch where individuality gains increasing importance. Foucault suggests that instead of asking "who is the author," questions such as where the work comes from, how it circulates, and who controls it should be posed (Foucault 1979).

By the end of the 19th century, what led to the separation of the concepts of artist and craftsman, and the sudden development of technology and industry began to be interpreted as something standing in contrast to the originality of new artistic styles presented by genius individuals? The cornerstone of the revolution in the fine arts, which occurred during that period with the emergence of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, was the issue of authentic expression and radical originality of style. The response to the aforementioned question provided by Benjamin in his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (Benjamin 1982) is that originals were never considered as uniquely singular and irreplicable as in the time of the emergence of mass society, and an unusual and, in a certain sense, technically imperfect artistic expression never captivated as it did during the flourishing of mechanical and serial production. Similarly, antiquities and ruins were never so esteemed as during the decline of the ancient, amidst modernization's momentum and the onset of interchangeability of all things in the culture of rising consumerism (Sekulić 2016, 898).

That's precisely the period in which the distinction between authorized and unauthorized content is emphasized to such an extent that soon the artist's signature itself will become an artistic and marketable asset. A gap is opened between art and craft, between pure (*l'art pour l'art*) and applied arts.

At the same time, in the period of rapid development and expansion of imperialism, these categories and concepts were very differently and un-reflexively applied to the art of different cultures of the world, and just as in the social sciences at that time in which a conceptual axis was formed based on oppositions between modern and traditional societies, rational and irrational, organic and mechanical, etc. which actually divide Europe and the West from the rest of the world, so another group of oppositions is formed in art, within which authorship, invention, pure art versus craft, commodity and non-commodity content of art become the boundaries of the distinction between the European and non-European world.

The strong influence of japonisme on European art in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries is among those cultural phenomena that significantly shape art as part of historical and broader cultural processes. Understanding the essential components of this transmission requires considering imperial expansion of Europe, which facilitated the free transposition of artistic languages, the establishment of metaphorical connections in artistic themes and content, and the transfer of specific artistic techniques that marked the emergence of entirely new painting styles in Europe. In this sense, understanding this transmission extends beyond the realm of art criticism, overflowing in its complexity into the fields of cultural and social analysis and anthropology of art.

Indeed, it is intriguing to explore the pathways and networks of exchange and power relations that enabled the transfer of Japanese cultural influences – both artistic artifacts and art concepts – and how they were subsequently adapted on European soil, adopted, assimilated, and influenced the emergence of revolutionary movements such as Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. Finally, it raises the question of the extent to which this entire transmission was characterized by an exotic and orientalist view of Japan in Europe and what the reception of the exoticization of Japan was within Japan itself.

During that time, in Europe, the Belle Époque flourished, marking a golden age of art, culture, and luxury. It was an era of extravagant fashion and the increasing influence of the middle class on society, with the emergence of grand public spaces, cultural and technical fairs, boulevards, theaters, cabarets, and circuses. Although this period is remembered as a time of (relative) political stability in Europe, at least concerning some of the most developed European countries at that time, it was actually a period of significant class conflicts, which sparked new and growing forms of political upheaval in the era of established industrial capitalism and the time of intense rivalry over colonies and cru-

cial maritime routes. Working-class dissatisfaction and Europe's imperial expansion represent the underside of the "golden age" of capitalism, whose contradictions would erupt in the early 20th century and ultimately lead to World War I.

However, even though motifs critiquing poverty and class stratification can undoubtedly be found in the painting of this period (they are far more prominently represented among the most famous representatives of literary realism of that time¹), social inequalities, as well as depictions of imperialism's darker side, are not prominent themes amidst the wealth of new multicultural content that served as eclectic inspiration for painters of that time, giving rise to new artistic styles within the expanding concept of fine art. At the same time, the arms race, which was accelerating in Europe at that time, facilitated the spread of social inequalities on an international scale – through the expropriation of wealth and the cultural and artistic heritage of conquered peoples and territories.

Japan had a very specific position in relation to other states of the Far East in which European rivals were interested. Even though it, like China after the Opium Wars, forcibly and not voluntarily opened its borders for international trade with European countries,² the policy of expansive modernization and westernization that the Japanese government opted for upon entering the Meiji period enabled Japan to act much more actively and freely in international relations and in international trade, as well as assuming the position of imperialist leader and militant conqueror in the Far East following the model of Europe. The long-term closure of Japan, which in the Edo period (1603–1868) led an isolationist policy (*sakoku*) explicitly forbidding trade with Western countries except the Dutch, also enabled "not only to preserve its traditions, but also to develop its own paradigm of connection with other cultures at a time when many European nations were expanding their colonial influence in Asia" (Kadoi 2024, 32).

¹ We are primarily talking about the representatives of realism in painting – Courbet, Damier, or individual works of slightly later representatives of (post)impressionism, such as Van Gogh, who was particularly fond of representing marginalized groups and painted motifs from the lives of poor people (the most famous is the series "Potato Eaters"). With the emergence of expressionism, just before World War I, this will once again become a central theme.

² It is important to note that it was the United States, not Europe, that forced Japan to end its isolation. This occurred after the 1853. siege under the command of Admiral Perry. One of the demands was the establishment of trade between Japan and the United States.

That is why the transfer of goods and their adaptation to the domestic cultural environment moved in both directions, not just in one, and Japan planned to start producing and distributing products adapted to Western culture, which would be sold in the European and generally Western market, where there was a huge demand at the time. for Japanese commodities, as authentic traditional Japanese products.

Although in Europe and in previous centuries there was a luxury market of “japonoiserie” and a great demand for Chinese and Japanese silk,³ porcelain, decorative objects and pieces of lacquer furniture and various decorative objects – fans, screens, parasols, etc. – the creative displacement of styles and traditions in the 19th century is evidently stronger. The possession of Japanese objects and works of art represented a prestigious status symbol even before, especially since it was not easy to obtain such goods in the period of Japanese isolationism before the middle of the 19th century. Marie Antoinette’s sophisticated lacquer collection is just an exclusive example of the enormous interest of the elites of European society, especially the high aristocracy, in collecting and making collections of expensive objects from East Asia, and from Japan and China in particular (Kleughten 2017, 180). It represented a kind of high fashion of the 18th century. Real estate agents, e.g. in Amsterdam, had their prominent clients all over Europe. These objects became significant symbols of prestige and wealth. At that time, Europeans lacked the technical knowledge and access to high-quality raw materials to produce porcelain (Meissen began production in 1710) and lacquer objects that could rival those from the East.

Throughout history, before the 19th century, Europeans attempted through espionage, theft, or imitation to obtain living raw materials (such as silkworms) or formulas (resin and lacquer, porcelain) for the production of precious materials that came from the East. However, in the 19th century, the expansion of trade and the production of somewhat cheaper imitations (lacquers, porcelain, jewelry, etc.) based on Japanese models became part of an increasingly widespread and profitable market, contributing to the development of Japanomania in Europe. By the end of the 19th century, Japanese fans triumphantly conquered Europe, not as utilitarian objects, but primarily as decorative items.

³ Europe has had an affinity for oriental products since antiquity. It is sufficient to mention the significance of the Silk Road. America was discovered since the Ottoman conquests interrupted the overland route to the Far East. Mediterranean European kingdoms were willing to finance voyages across the Atlantic in search of a new marine route to Asia.

Japan itself has contributed significantly to the characteristics of that market. As an example we can take the embroidered Japanese textile market (McDermott, 2010) This type of textile was not commonly used in Japan in the Edo period. The kimono was traditionally painted, not embroidered. However, embroidered fabrics are now exported as traditional objects of fine art, and silk is beginning to be processed in new ways. The main producers of traditional Japanese silk were located in Kyoto. With the entry into the Meiji period, the transfer of the capital to Tokyo, the development of a competitive market and the rise of the middle class, the traditional expensive silk market was threatened, and innovations were introduced in the way of weaving, painting, techniques, etc. which made the products themselves cheaper. While this silk was successfully sold at the end of the 19th century on the European market as an expensive commodity representing traditional Japan, the Japanese government exhibited the same products at Japanese fairs (which were organized after similar fairs of technology and art in the West), as what represented modernization of Japan (McDermott 2011, 44).

In Europe in the second half of the 19th century, there were several intermediary enterprises or individuals of varying degrees of importance and scale who distributed Japanese goods and artworks, or who, as curators and art critics, were significant in promoting Japanese art. The roles of critics, collectors, and distributors often overlapped. At the International Exhibition in Paris in 1878, the trading company Kiryu Kosho Kaisha was unofficially represented. This company was funded by the Japanese government, enabling the opening of trade in Paris for Japanese goods, with the aim of strengthening trade ties with the West and ultimately accelerating Japan's industrialization. While Europe was interested in goods representing traditional Japanese culture, Japan was interested in purchasing in Europe anything that could advance industry in Japan. One of the largest dealers in Japanese artworks in Europe, Hayashi Tadamasu, initially acted as a translator in transactions for that company, later becoming an independent art dealer and playing an extremely important role not only in shaping the market for a wide variety of expensive goods from Japan but also in shaping broader perceptions of Japanese culture and art in the West. Together with collectors, traders like him exerted a huge influence on artists such as Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Manet, as well as many others.

“However, tracing the spread of Japonisme – through traders, collectors, artists, designers, patrons, and audiences – is complex and often confusing” (Breuer 2011, 67). The first encounter with Japanese ukiyo-e prints

for many artists of that time was entirely accidental, and the transportation of such goods cannot always be clearly traced.

In addition to large collections of Japanese artifacts, which essentially did not only contain artworks, Japanese goods of various values would also end up among smaller traders or in smaller galleries. For example, in one of the famous Van Gogh paintings, "Portrait of Pere Tanguy," the merchant and master of art supplies Julien Tanguy is depicted. In his shop, which was also a mini-gallery, the artistic avant-garde gathered, including Van Gogh. Although Tanguy did not sell Japanese artifacts, his shop contained a large collection of Japanese prints, which Van Gogh depicted in this portrait, as a kind of internal exhibition. Such seemingly insignificant "exhibitions" actually had a great influence on the artists of that time, as they became acquainted with Japan through them (Kodera 1984, 190).

On the European market, there was no strict distinction made between artistic and non-artistic objects of Japanese origin. There are certainly several reasons for this. One reason is that in Japan itself, there was no distinct difference between decorative and purely artistic works. Objects of everyday use could be treated in Japan as items of the finest art and of the highest aesthetic values. Interior decoration, the Zen concept of empty spaces, the tea ceremony, clothing items, religious practices, all had pronounced aesthetic value. Artists in Japan were engaged in both practical and aesthetic production simultaneously, so they could produce ordinary ceramics alongside the finest porcelain. Craftsmanship was highly valued and considered as valuable as artistic talent itself.

The second group of reasons related to the characteristics of the Western market, where everything coming from Japan was considered exceptional rather than utilitarian objects, due to their exoticism. This can explain how it was possible for, for example, square pieces of fabric used to wrap gifts and ceremonial objects in Japan (furoshiki and fukusa) to be sold in Paris as framed pictures. These items were intentionally transformed into objects of pure artistry, like paintings (McDermott 2011, 37).

Essentially, everything that is not typical of European culture was considered valuable and significant, and there were no clear criteria for evaluation according to artistic value, and the idea of Japan was shaped through an interest in objects, not people (Kleughten 2017, 178). In addition, in the historical context associated with the spread of European imperialism, there was a different attitude towards Western and Eastern art in Europe. For example, some examples of unique prints by Japanese artists Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806), Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849), and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858) were distributed to the European market as unau-

thorized prints under the general name “Japanese prints”, like some kind of raw and unprocessed artistic material that will serve as inspiration for the artistic work of Western artists (Lambourne 2005, 17). It was the works of these mentioned artists (who would only later, thanks to art criticism, be recognized in Europe as exceptional artists), as well as the entire ukiyo-e genre, to which they belong, exerted a huge influence on European painting in the second half of the 19th century. Ukiyo-e, or “pictures of the world of transience” (or “floating world”) represented graphic woodcuts, paintings and illustrations that related to the themes of everyday life in the urban culture of the Edo period, or to landscapes and pictures from nature (flowers, insects, etc.) or motifs from life in entertainment districts. For example, Kitagawa Utamaro’s most famous prints (“Pillow Poem”) depicted erotic scenes or portraits of beautiful women, including courtesans, such as the “Yoshiwara Women” series, or depicted the everyday life of ordinary women doing their usual daily chores.

Hokusai’s works depicted landscapes, portraits, characters from Japanese folklore and nature studies. Some of his prints have become symbols of Japanese art, such as the series of prints “Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji”, which includes probably the most famous print “The Great Wave of Kanagawa”. This entire series was created in co-authorship with Hiroshige.

Hiroshige, like the aforementioned authors, exerted a huge influence on some of the Western artists who created new styles, with his specific works, which they often copied. Hiroshige is famous for depicting the same motifs in different seasons, which also served as an inspiration to Western artists for similar subjects (Breuer 2010).

The question remains open as to where the boundary lies between being inspired by a work or a style and copying those works. This paper does not aim to clarify and establish that boundary but rather to highlight their interplay within which the position of Western and Japanese art was subject to different criteria. On the other hand, it explores how the emergence of new and revolutionary Western styles occurred through specific paths of discovery and adoption of very specific features of art and cultures of other nations, ultimately transforming them through assimilation into inventions attributed above all to European originality in those elements taken from those cultures.

INSPIRATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS

Initially, Western artists were inspired by typical Japanese objects that appeared only as motifs in paintings. These primarily included depictions of European women with fans or with some Japanese objects, in kimonos or

clothing with elements of Japanese style, often with Japanese screens in the background (Manet: *Woman with a Fan* /1873/ or Whistler's "Princess from the Land of Porcelain" /1863/ or James Tissot's "Japanese Woman in the Bath" /1864/) (Breuer 2010, 70). These paintings actually don't resemble Japanese painting too much, but they contain, alongside iconic motifs of Japanese objects that sometimes saturate the paintings, some elements of ukiyo-e composition – asymmetric or diagonal composition, reduced (flattened) space, accentuated colors, and somewhat stylized figures inspired by Japanese models. There is a whole gradation of these adoptions.

Then there are the themes from ukiyo-e works. The transposition of geisha motifs, as well as courtesans (oiran) from the entertainment districts, which often appeared in Japanese woodcuts, served for a completely new representation of the culture of the Moulin Rouge, can-can dancers, and entertainers in the works of Toulouse-Lautrec. Realistically, there weren't many similarities between the dances in Japanese entertainment districts and can-can, but this transposition allowed for giving new meaning and significance to the entertainment district in Paris, creating a heterotopic image of it resembling the "floating world" of Japanese urban culture, where special laws of creativity, freedom, and sexual ethos prevail. The cultural significance of such transpositions is very significant – "the figure of Japan represents the archetype of the aesthetic subjectivity of the queer project... Japan was not only a figure, it was also a place, whose modernization intensified... the aesthetic critique of bourgeois gender norms and undermined the tendency to approach Japanese culture as if it were incomprehensible" (Lavery 2016, 1161). There are many such transpositions through the selection of Japanese motifs in European painting from the late 19th century, which lose their fragmentary character and only iconic resemblance, as still recognized in Whistler's paintings, and become holistic examples of an entirely new style inspired by Japanese aesthetics, such as Van Gogh's "Almond Blossoms" (1888), or the presentation of dynamic scenes from everyday life that exclude posing figures, such as bathing (Edgar Degas).

In Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, traditional methods of composition and color in European painting were radically altered in addition to the themes themselves. Japanese ukiyo-e artists typically left the center of the composition empty, with objects in the foreground enlarged. There was no horizon, and often small cropped elements were put at the edges of the picture, creating a comic book-like impression and enhancing their decorative effect. Ukiyo-e is characterized by dynamic, asymmetric, and diagonal composition, allowing for the depiction of figures in

motion and indicating a moment in time. In this sense, the composition of ukiyo-e works allowed for the portrayal of both time and space. Dramatic impression was heightened by framing the characters, so parts of the composition were often “cut off,” or emphasis was placed on a detail. European painting, until the advent of Impressionism, generally favored a symmetrical composition without using such techniques.

Moreover, the effect of perspective in ukiyo-e works was created according to different principles than linear perspective, emerged in Europe since the Renaissance. Thus, European painters began experimenting with methods such as bird’s-eye perspective, the relationship between small and large objects in the picture, creating the effect of interior or infinite space, and so on.

In ukiyo-e art, the basic idea of the work is reduced and simple, with prominent main characters and objects, emphasized by clear outlining of their contours. Although ukiyo-e prints were initially monochromatic, because the technique of coloring them was complex (each color required a new mold, so for a polychromatic print, several layers of wooden molds were used), many ukiyo-e prints were later painted, and in the West, vivid examples of such works became the most popular. Artists adopted bold and simple colors to create strong effects in their paintings, thereby breaking the standards of classical European painting, which largely relied on *umbra* and neutral tones.

Additionally, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism borrowed other techniques and elements from Japanese art, which were considered radically original and new at the time: the use of quick and short brushstrokes, the use of reeds for painting, pointillism, subjective and emotional perception of the world, the dramatic moment of the painting, and so on.

Japanese painting was also developing under the influence of Western painting (Okakura Kakuzo, Yokoyama Taikan, Kuroda Seiki, Shimomura Kanzan, etc.), but that influence was not interpreted as particularly original inventions of Japanese artists. On the other hand, Japanese artistic heritage primarily represented raw material for Western artists, whose reinterpretation was seen as a particularly original invention of Western painting.

Even when specific works were copied, it was often not indicated that it was a copy of an original work by a Japanese artist, or it was not fully disclosed. There are many examples of this – for instance, “Bathing” (Degas Edward) (1886) was created based on “Women in the Public Bath” by Hokusai (1820), Mary Cassot’s painting “The Letter” (1890) was created based on the picture “Courtesan Hinazuru” by Utamaro (1794–5). Van Gogh copied “Rain over the Shin Osashi Bridge” (from the series “One

Hundred Views of Edo" (1857) by Hiroshige) in "Bridge in the Rain" (1887) with only a general note that the painting was done after Hiroshige. This, of course, does not mean that these artists intended to plagiarize these works and conceal it, but rather that referring to very recognizable and specific sources and works was not considered essential when it came to Japanese art, and that this copying actually created a specific impression in these paintings.

The deliberate technical imperfection and "unfinished" touch of these "copies" compared to the originals also indicate that it was not plagiarism, and it will remain one of the main ways of conveying internal experience or impression as the mark of a new style. The "imperfection" created the impression of an internal experience of a world significantly different from the objective reality that the artist no longer wants to reproduce but rather wants to move away from.

Due to this unusual and imperfect style, many of the seminal works of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists had little or very low market value at the time. At that time, Renoir, Whistler, were bought, as their works still fit into the classical style and salon art. However, Van Gogh's works could not be sold. At that time, it would have been unthinkable for his works to reach a price over \$80,000,000, which actually happened a century later. While Japanese artistic works are clearly classified as commodities on the Western market, European painting developed under this influence is not expressed through market values. Non-commercialism is associated with the idea of pure art, or with the idea of a completely different world liberated from the practical framework of life.

The orientalist view of Japan reaches its ultimate expression when it ceases to be just a way of relating to a work of art, a picture, but when the artist is completely immersed in that fantastic Japanized world, as was the case with Van Gogh. For Van Gogh, Japan eventually ceased to be associated with the content of the picture, art, but the entire reality was absorbed into that fantasy. There was no particular interest in Japanese visual art in the Netherlands at that time, so he began to engage with it after moving to Paris, where he began to buy large quantities of Japanese prints. He organized exhibitions of prints in cafes and bohemian gatherings in Paris. For him, Japan gradually became a magical land without shadows, growing into a separate reality untainted by the grayness of everyday life. His letters particularly reveal the transformation of Japan and Japanese art into a utopian dream (Gogh 2022). Van Gogh moved to the south of France, to Arles, because it reminded him of an imaginary Japan, a land of light and sun. From there, as he wrote to his sister, he began to see things "with

a Japanese eye,” emphasizing that he no longer needed Japanese art because he was “in Japan” (in Arles). All he needed to do was open his inner eye. In one of his letters to his brother Theo, Van Gogh says: “The weather here is beautiful, and if it were always like this, it would be more beautiful than the artistic paradise, it would be absolute Japan” (Kodera 1984, 189).

CONCLUSION

The japonisme that emerged in Europe in the late 19th century was always much more than the study and acquaintance with another distant culture. It appeared as the birth of cosmopolitanism shaped by the developed capitalism characteristics.

It is a phenomenon of the interweaving of artistic and cultural contents of the East and West in unequal power relations, by no means a symmetrical process that spread into all spheres of life, painting, sculpture, crafts, fashion⁴, design, architecture, photography, theater, literature, and music, expressing itself through the gradation of various appropriations from eclectic iconic motifs of Japanese objects, through the copying of techniques, distortive “translation” of cultural meanings to the creation of utopia about Japan.

At the same time, this process was a constitutive part of the emerging consumer culture – Japan was being bought and sold in Europe. Like fashion, by 1920, Western artists had exhausted everything they needed for their own artistic creation, assimilating all those contents into the vision of new European art and culture, embarking on a quest for new inspiration. That was the first wave of Japan’s influence, which would later be revitalized in other ways from the 1970s onwards.

The contents of other cultures enabled a qualitative leap that made it possible to establish distinction and break free from the legacy of the existing and dominant European tradition. (Carroll 2007, 134)

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⁴ Paul Poiret is a designer who introduced oriental influences into Western high fashion in the first decade of the 20th century. Not only did he create the famous kimono coat, but he also changed the line of the female figure by eliminating the corset.

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