Introduction

Reconstructing Bing’s Legendary 1890 Exhibition of Japanese Prints at the École des Beaux-Arts

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Abstract

The exhibition of Japanese prints held at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1890 is a milestone in the history of Japonisme. Organized by S. Bing in collaboration with a number of Japonistes, the exhibition presented more than 1100 Japanese prints, illustrated books and kakemono. This article reconstructs this historic event in its diverse aspects: clarifying the preparation process, reconstructing the exhibition venue, identifying exhibits, and examining their lenders. All these factors will be placed in a historical context, revealing how meticulously Bing prepared the exhibition and subsequently promoted ukiyo-e prints in France. The impact of this exhibition on artists and critics, which is clearly visible in artists’ letters and contemporary reviews published in the press, is also briefly discussed.

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Keywords

ukiyo-e prints – illustrated books – exhibition – École des Beaux-Arts – Siegfried Bing

1 About Our Research

The Japanese [...] make most beautiful works. I have seen marvelous things at the Japanese Exhibition, a group of monkeys on a branch among others. It is wonderful.¹

The above is part of a letter dated May 13, 1890, which the painter Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) sent to his son Georges (1871–1961). In the letter, Pissarro, who had visited the Japanese art exhibition at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, extols the beauty of the exhibits, although the painting of monkeys he mentions (Fig. 1) was not the work of an ukiyo-e artist. It was made by Mori Sosen 森狙仙 (1747–1821), an Osaka painter famous for his painting depicting monkeys.

Since the title of the 1890 Japanese art exhibition organized by Siegfried Bing (1838–1905) (Fig. 2) includes the words “gravure japonaise” (Japanese woodblock print), it is generally perceived to have been solely an ukiyo-e exhibition. In reality, however, it was more than that. The show was indeed an excellent survey of ukiyo-e prints, but its more than 1,100 exhibits also included kakemono 挿物 (hanging scrolls), illustrated books, and even bronze sculptures and a palanquin 駕籠 (kago).² Among all the exhibits what impressed Camille Pissarro most was not a print, but a painting mounted as a kakemono.

² As will be discussed below, there were, in fact, two types of posters, one with the “gravure japonaise” in the title, another with “maîtres japonais”. The two volume catalogue contains only prints and illustrated books, and no kakemono, sculptures etc. It seems quite possible that the exhibition was originally planned as an exhibition of Japanese prints (including printed illustrated books), but that it was decided at a later stage to present other types of artworks as well, hence the alternative poster with “maîtres japonais”. 
Though the details remain fragmentary, the enormous impact of the exhibition is well known; it made a profound impression, not only on Pissarro, but on a great number of artists, including, for instance, Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) and the group of artists known as Les Nabis. Bing was awarded the Légion d’Honneur in July 1890, only two months after the exhibition, which shows that the importance of the event was also recognized by the current French government (Fig. 3).³

³ Archives nationales, France, dossier LH 243 6.
FIGURE 2  From left, Siegfried Bing, Louis Gonse, Madame Koechlin, Gonse’s son and Madame Gonse, photograph taken in 1899, Archives Krafft, Collection SAVR / musée Le Verger, Reims.

FIGURE 3  Procès-verbal de la Réception d’un Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur for Siegfried Bing on July 28th in 1890 (Archives Nationales).
Surprisingly, however, so far there has been no thorough investigation of the particulars of this legendary exhibition. Just what kind of event it was, and what exactly was exhibited remained largely a mystery.

The purpose of this special issue of the Journal of Japonisme is to reconstruct, in as faithful a manner as possible, the contents and effects of this exhibition, which is of such vital significance to both Japonisme research and the reception of Japanese art in the west. The initial idea of reconstructing the exhibition had been in Tsukasa Kōdera’s mind for decades, when he started, a few years ago, to look for a collaborator, a specialist of ukiyo-e who would be able and willing to identify the works in the exhibition catalogue. Megumi Soda, a researcher specializing in ukiyo-e who is also well-versed in the French language, accepted the task and on the basis of the exhibition catalogue and other literature on Japonisme, they started preliminary research. While many of the catalogue entries were too brief to allow identification, conclusive identification was possible in many others. As Soda’s research progressed, they gradually came to realize that the results could be worthy of publication. They were subsequently joined by Tatsuya Saito and Geneviève Aitken, who showed both an understanding of and an interest toward the potential significance of the study and embarked on their own investigations of contemporary documents and exhibition reviews, as well as collectors who lent items for the event. This special issue presents the fruits of these contributors’ research.

In the pages that follow, we will examine the exhibition from its preparatory stages to its initial reception and subsequent impact in more or less chronological order. The issue also includes a partial list of exhibited works. Since the number of successfully identified works amounts to around 300, space constraints make it impossible for us to provide a complete list of identified works in this issue. The complete list of exhibits is available on the Brill website <https://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.4509251>.

2 The Road to the Exhibition – From Preparation to Realization

Bing undertook careful preparations to hold an exhibition of Japanese prints on an unprecedented scale at the center of French art education, the École des Beaux-Arts. A document from February, 1890 reveals some of the particulars of the process leading up to the show. The French Archives nationales house a copy of a letter dated February 28 and addressed to the Minister of Beaux-Arts, Léon Bourgeois (1851–1925). The letter requests permission to use the halls of the École des Beaux-Arts as the exhibition venue. At the time, the École des Beaux-Arts fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Instruction and
Beaux-Arts. Since this request was basically a formality, the letter is relatively brief.4

Honorable Minister,

We are hereby requesting you to be so kind as to authorize an exhibition of Japanese engravings in the halls of the École des Beaux-Arts. This exhibition should take place starting next April 15th and conclude on May 15th with an optional extension until May 22.

Of all the Japanese arts, the art of the woodcut has now at last revealed itself. This art form is least known in Europe, and at the same time, could be assigned first place among all the world’s graphic arts without the risk of contradiction. Therefore, the public will discover in it a source of unexpected pleasure, and artists will find much knowledge tying in, curiously enough, with the most modern ideas.

Our museums have hosted expressions of art of all the world’s peoples. Japan, in its turn, is emerging from the isolation in which it has acquiesced for centuries, and is now asking for its proper place in the sun. We welcome it with all the more alacrity because in Japanese art, we have the

4 Archives nationales, France, AJ 52 840. The original French letter reads as follows: “Paris, le 28 Février 1890 / Monsieur le Ministre, / Nous venons vous demander de vouloir bien autoriser une exposition de la gravure japonaise dans les salles de l’École des Beaux-Arts. Cette exposition aurait lieu à partir du 15 avril prochain pour finir le 15 mai avec prolongation facultative jusqu’au 22 mai. / De tous les arts japonais, celui de la gravure s’est révélé en dernier. C’est l’art le moins connu en Europe et en même temps c’est celui auquel on peut assigner, sans crainte d’être contredit, le premier rang parmi les œuvres gravées de tous les pays. Le public y trouvera donc une source de jouissance inespérée, et les artistes y puiseront de nombreux renseignements, cadrant, très curieusement, avec les idées les plus modernes. / Nos musées ont été hospitaliers aux manifestations d’art de tous les peuples de la terre. Le Japon sort à son tour de l’isolement où il s’était complu durant les siècles, et vient nous demander sa place au soleil. Nous l’accueillerons avec d’autant plus d’empressement que dans son art nous avons la rare bonne fortune de rencontrer l’émanation d’une civilisation autonome, qui ne s’était nourrie que de son propre suc, et qui par suite s’est conservé pur de tout mélange extérieur. / Nous aurons la conscience d’avoir puissamment servi les besoins industriels de notre époque, sans cesse en quête d’éléments nouveaux pour sa marche en avant. / Nous ajouterez qu’il ne s’agit pas ici de faire connaître les productions d’une industrie courante, mais de dérouler le tableau d’un art complet depuis ses origines jusqu’aux époques modernes. / Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Ministre, l’expression de notre plus haute considération. / Signé Ed. de Goncourt, Bing, Burty, Taigny, Gonse, Guimet, Bouilhet etc etc.”
rare good fortune to encounter the expression of an autonomous civiliza-
tion, one that has been nourished only from its own sap, and as a conse-
quence, one that has been able to fend off any external admixture.

We will be content with the knowledge of having vigorously served the
industrial needs of our epoch, which is relentlessly searching for new ele-
ments in its march to the future.

We should also add that this exhibition is not about familiarizing an
audience with the products of a contemporary industry, but rather about
unfolding the tableau of a fully developed art form from its origins until
the modern epoch.

Dear Minister, please accept our expression of great respect.

Signed: Ed. de Goncourt, Bing, Burty, Taigny, Gonse, Guimet, Bouilhet
etc etc

The letter includes the signatures of renowned Japonistes such as Edmond
de Goncourt (1822–1896), Bing, Philippe Burty (1830–1890), Edmond Taigny
(1828–1906), Louis Gonse (1846–1921), Émile Guimet (1836–1918), and Henri
Bouilhet (1830–1910). Since the archived letter is a copy, further signatures have
been omitted, but the original probably carried the signatures of all the mem-
ers of the organizing committee, whose names also appear in the exhibition
catalogue. A letter that Bing sent to Edmond de Goncourt tells us that the Ja-
ponistes gathered at Bing’s residence on Rue Vezelay in order to sign the letter
to the Minister of Beaux-Arts. In the letter, Bing calls on Goncourt to sign his
name first among the signatories.5

5 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des manuscrits, N. A. F. 22452, folio 275. The
original French letter reads as follows: “19, rue Chauchat / Paris le 26 Février 1890 / Cher
Monsieur de Goncourt / On m’a prié d’organiser une exposition publique de l’art Japonais de
groupe de collectionneurs aura simplement à en formuler la demande, et il me paraît indiqué
– si tant est que l’entreprise vous paraîse digne de vos sympathies – que votre nom figure en
tête. / Je convoque nos amateurs chez moi Rue Vezelay N° 9 pour Vendredi 3 heures. Ce me
serait une grande joie de vous voir assister à la réunion. / Veuillez croire, cher Monsieur de
Goncourt, mon inaltérable dévouement. / S. Bing”
Dear Monsieur de Goncourt,

I have been asked to organize a public exhibition of the Japanese art of woodblock print. The minister has made the rooms of the École des Beaux-Arts available for our use. Our little group of collectors need only put forward the request, and it seems obvious to me – supposing that you deem the project worthy of your goodwill – that your name figure at the top of the list.

I am calling our group of connoisseurs together at my house, No.9 Rue Vezelay, on Friday at 3 o’clock. It would give me great pleasure if you were to take part in our meeting.

I hope that you will accept this letter as a gesture of my unwavering dedication,

S. Bing

A perusal of the list of the members of the organizing committee in the exhibition catalogue reveals the names of many of the most prominent Japonistes of the period. In addition to the signatories mentioned at the end of the copy of the official request, the committee also included individuals such as Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929), Charles Gillot (1853–1903), Roger Marx (1859–1913), Edouard-Lévy Montefiore (1820–1894), Antonin Proust (1832–1905), Charles Tillot (1825–1895), and Henri Vever (1854–1942). With the exception of Marx, all of them lent works from their personal collections to the exhibition. The list also includes the Japanese envoy to France and “Minister Plenipotentiary,” Tanaka Fujimaro (1845–1909), as an honorary member of the organizing committee. It is clear that a great many Japonistes supported the exhibition in various ways, but without a doubt it was Bing who assumed the leading role. As mentioned above, Bing was awarded the rank of Chevalier in the Légion d’Honneur in July 1890 for his merits as the main organizer of the exhibition and publisher of the art magazine Le Japon artistique.6

The organizing committee consisted not only of individuals, but also involved two art museums, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the Musée Guimet. The former lent woodblock prints to the exhibition, while the latter lent illustrated books printed from woodblocks. The archives of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs include correspondence related to the lending of such works to the Beaux-Arts show. According to the exhibition catalogue, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs displayed six *ukiyo-e* prints at the exhibition. However, a letter dated April 22 in which Bing’s assistant Marcel Morot asks the museum to send the works as soon as possible, not six but seven works are mentioned. These include a work by Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1797–1861) designated as *Barque sous un pont* (*Boat under a Bridge*), which appears nowhere in the exhibition catalogue. In addition, a number of *kakemono* known to have been presented at the exhibition are similarly left unmentioned in the catalogue. As we can see from these examples, not all of the exhibited works were listed in the catalogue. According to Bing’s correspondence with the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, the museum also lent 265 picture frames and a number of glass display cases to the École des Beaux-Arts. It is clear from correspondence with the frame dealer D. Marchand that Bing also played the role of middleman in ordering frames for the prints from tradesmen. It can be surmised that Louis Metman (1862–1943), who worked at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and lent *ukiyo-e* prints from his own personal collection to the show, was a help in making these transactions go smoothly.

The exhibition opened on April 25, as written in the catalogue. However, it did not end on May 25 as stated in the catalogue, but was extended for five days to the 30th to meet the demand of art enthusiasts. The art critic Gustave Geffroy (1855–1926) decribed his delight at the exhibition’s extension as follows: “Happily, the woodblock print exhibition at the École des Beaux-Arts has been extended. For a few days more, we will be able to explore this nation of art, which has never been so open to us before.” According to an advertisement for the exhibition in the May issue of *Le Japon artistique*, the show’s opening hours were from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The exhibition opened in showery weather at the École des Beaux-Arts on Friday, April 25, 1890. During the opening ceremony, which started at 1 p.m., the director of Beaux-Arts, Gustave Larroumet (1852–1903), praised the organizing committee’s achievement and the “veritable little museum” of Japanese prints on display. The exhibition was open to the public from 3 p.m. on the

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7 Musée des arts décoratifs, Archives de l’UCAD, D2 19.
8 “Gazette du jour,” in *La Justice*, May 23, 1890, p. 3; and “Échos,” in *La Presse*, May 25, 1890, p. 1.
same day. Many important government officials visited during the exhibition period. On May 8, the Minister of Beaux-Arts visited the show and assured the organizing committee members that he would come again. Moreover, on May 14, the French President Sadi Carnot (1837–1894) was present for a full two hours, together with his wife, the Minister of Justice Armand Fallières (1841–1931), and General Joseph Brugère (1841–1918). Bing and Georges Clemenceau acted as guides. According to Geffroy, the number of visitors to the ukiyo-e exhibition paled somewhat in comparison with attendance at the Salon of the Société des Artistes Français or the newly-opened Salon of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, but visitors devoted fuller attention to the works on display there. As the Salons attracted huge numbers of people every year, it was perhaps inevitable that the number of visitors to the École des Beaux-Arts would be smaller. However, one journalist reported that the number of visitors to the Japanese prints show was impressive, even in comparison with the Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) and Antoine-Louis Barye (1795–1875) retrospective exhibitions previously held at the École des Beaux-Arts.

3 Posters and Catalogues

Posters

Naturally, posters were made to draw attention to the exhibition. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France houses two types of posters, one bearing the words “Exposition de la gravure japonaise” (exhibition of Japanese woodblock engravings) and the other the catchphrase “Exposition des maîtres japonais” (exhibition of Japanese masters) (Figs 4 and 5). They were designed by Jules Chéret (1836–1932), who probably received the commission because he was considered the most accomplished chromolithographer in France at the time, and therefore a sort of counterpart to the Japanese color printmakers. According to Megumi Soda, the figure on the posters has been identified as the lady from Kuniyoshi’s nikuhitsuaga 肉筆画 (brush painting) Woman Reading a Letter, which is now housed in the Nakau Collection in Kobe, Japan (Fig. 6). In the

11 “Gazette du jour,” in La Justice, May 9, 1890, p. 2; and “Choses et gens,” in Le Matin, May 9, 1890, p. 3.
12 “Choses et gens,” in Le Matin, May 15, 1890, p. 3; “Faits divers,” in Le Temps, May 16, 1890, p. 3; and “Informations. Paris,” in Moniteur des arts, no. 1892 (May 16, 1890), p. 163.
FIGURE 4  Jules Chéret, Exposition de la gravure japonaise à l’École des Beaux-Arts, poster 85 × 125 cm. Paris 1890, version 1 BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE

FIGURE 5  Jules Chéret, Exposition des maîtres japonais à l’École des Beaux-Arts, poster. 85 × 121 cm. Paris 1890, version 2 BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE
style of the actual *kakemono*, a scene of fluttering cherry blossom petals is depicted on both edges of the poster. Apparently, the posters put up around town attracted considerable notice, prompting one journalist to comment, “The illustrated poster one can see around Paris is quite curious and demands attention.”

15 “Chronique,” in *La Curiosité universelle* 171 (April 28, 1890), p. 3.
the posters as follows: “The large figure of the woman in the trailing robe, signed J. Chéret, was truly exquisite.”

Catalogues
Just as there were two types of posters, there were two types of catalogues. One was a partial catalogue including only the 725 woodblock prints which made up Part I of the exhibition. The second was a complete catalogue including not only Part I, but also the 428 illustrated books and albums which made up Part II. Following the example of *Le Japon artistique*, the printing process of *gilotage* was used for the many color illustrations in the catalogue. Kitagawa Utamaro’s 喜多川歌麿 (?–1806) works were especially highlighted with three illustrations in color, all of which were foldout pages. At the beginning of the catalogue, it is mentioned that 30 copies were specially printed on paper from Tokyo’s National Printing Bureau (Insatsu-kyoku 印刷局, spelled *Insetsu-kioku* in the catalogue), which indicates that a deluxe edition of the catalogue also existed. The National Printing Bureau had exhibited various kinds of handmade Japanese *washi* paper at the Exposition Universelle de Paris of 1889, which won universal accolades and were awarded the Grand Prix. It is possible that the *washi* from this Exposition somehow came to be used for the deluxe-edition catalogues of the École des Beaux-Arts exhibition. It is also possible that the *washi* paper was brought to France by the head of Japan’s Official Gazette Bureau at that time, Takahashi Kenzō 高橋健三 (1855–1898). Takahashi was in Paris from February to April 1890 to purchase rotary presses for printing the Official Gazette, and brought along various types of paper from the National Printing Bureau. It is possible that some of the leftover paper was used for the *ukiyo-e* exhibition catalogues. At any rate, the *washi* produced by the National Printing Bureau seems to have been of very high quality indeed. The copy of the catalogue housed in Japan’s National Diet Library, which is believed to be one of the 30 deluxe-edition copies, remains in an extremely good state of preservation today. (Figs 7, 8, 9, 10)

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18 National Archives of Japan, 2A-011-00, 00463100. Takahashi Kenzō launched the art magazine *Kokka* 国華 together with Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (1863–1913) in 1889, so it would not be at all surprising for him to show interest in the Beaux-Arts exhibition.
19 National Diet Library, Japan, K3-B677. In many parts of this catalogue, the names of *ukiyo-e* artists are handwritten in *kanji* (Chinese characters). The owner’s initials “C. R.” and the year “1890” are written on the inside cover.
FIGURE 7

FIGURE 8  Figure 7, title page with inscription “C.R. 1890”.
More important than either the illustrations or the paper, however, was Bing’s preface to the catalogue. Titled “La gravure japonaise” (English title “Japanese Engraving”), it was also published in the May 1890 issue of Le Japon artistique, which came out during the exhibition period. Bing begins by explaining how Japanese woodblock prints came to be discovered by westerners. He goes on to state that it was not until about ten years before (around 1880) that French collectors began to acquire Japanese woodblock prints in earnest and attempts were made in France and Britain to understand their history and

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20 The English version of the magazine, Artistic Japan, contains a somewhat shorter version of this article under the title “Japanese Engraving.”
development. According to Bing, the 1890 exhibition constituted a continuation of such attempts. In Bing’s own words, “The main lines for it are fixed today, and the time appears to have arrived for making known this art, now that we can indicate the various phases of its development from its origin down to our own days.” Bing then outlines the history of *ukiyo-e*. Beginning with the transmission of Buddhism from China to Japan, he goes on to explain that alongside Buddhist painting and schools of painters like the Tosa school (*Tosa-ha*, 土佐派) and the Kanō school (*Kanō-ha*, 狩野派) that catered to the country’s elite, a demand arose for artworks which depicted popular themes and could be

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purchased as cheaply as possible. Bing also explains the history of woodblock printing itself, which was likewise transmitted to Japan from China. Within this history, he cites the emergence of Hishikawa Moronobu (菱川師宣, ?–1694) as a turning point. Calling him a “powerful genius” who “forged a path for so many worthy artists to advance upon,” Bing emphasizes the importance of the role played by Moronobu in the history of *ukiyo-e*. Indeed, the artist Bing writes most enthusiastically about is not Katsushika Hokusai (葛飾北斎, 1760–1849) or Utagawa Hiroshige (歌川広重, 1797–1858), but Moronobu. In addition, Bing makes special mention of Torii Kiyonobu (鳥居清信, 1664–1729), crediting him with establishing the genre of single-sheet block prints of *yakusha-e* (images of kabuki actors). Bing’s mention of these early *ukiyo-e* artists, who are sometimes referred to as “the Primitives,” can be said to reflect the attention that such artists had begun to receive in France from the late 1880s.

Along with his historical outline, Bing’s preface provides a brief but very concrete description of the techniques involved in *ukiyo-e* woodblock printing. He explains how an ink drawing by the artist on translucent paper is affixed to a woodblock, which is then carved by a carver and finally handed over to a printer who decides the specifics of the multicolor printing process. The art critic, Théodore Duret (1838–1927), had already mentioned *ukiyo-e* woodblock printing technique in his 1888 article in *Le Japon artistique*, but provided little more than a very rough summary. Bing’s technical exposition appears to have been novel at that time, and was quoted repeatedly in reviews of the exhibition. His explanation, combined with the woodblock printing tools and original drawings on display in glass cases, no doubt helped French artists to understand Japanese woodblock printing techniques. For example, Henri Rivière (1864–1951) recalled that when he attempted to make multicolor woodblock prints in imitation of the Japanese style in 1889, he lacked correct knowledge of the process and had to devise his own techniques. In this way, the technical explanation in the catalogue, which was likely viewed by Rivière himself, must

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have made a substantial contribution to the development of multicolor woodblock printing in France.

Since Bing’s preface focuses on introducing the contributions of Moronobu and Torii Kiyonobu, it cannot be said to provide a clear and complete account of the entire history of *ukiyo-e*. However, Bing’s chronological table included in the catalogue, which organizes *ukiyo-e* artists according to historical period, does provide an overview. It divides the history of Japanese woodblock prints into the following periods: Preliminary Epoch (1608–1675), First Period (1675–1720), Second Period (1720–1760), Third Period (1760–1800) and Fourth Period (1800–1860). Here, Bing designates the Third Period as the artistic culmination of the color woodblock printing process of chromoxylography. In other words, he rates the age of artists like Suzuki Harunobu 鈴木春信 (1725?–1770) and Utamaro as superior to the Fourth Period, which includes artists like Hokusai and Hiroshige, and was traditionally viewed as the artistic peak of *ukiyo-e*. It is likely that Bing modeled his chronology after the work of William Anderson (1842–1900), who divided the history of Japanese woodblock prints from the 9th to 19th century into seven distinct periods and presented them in a chronological table.25 Ernest Leroux (1845–1917), who worked as an expert in Japanese art for several auction houses and compiled various auction catalogues from the 1890s onward, revised Bing’s chronological table for his own catalogues. Leroux’s classification of *ukiyo-e* distinguishes a First (17th to mid-18th century), a Second (late 18th century) and a Third Period (19th century). Leroux’s auction catalogues greatly contributed to the understanding of the history of Japanese woodblock prints in the west.26

The École des Beaux-Arts exhibition was also of importance for Bing’s own insight into the chronology of *ukiyo-e*. In 1888, when Bing took part in the third Exposition Internationale de Blanc et Noir, he listed *ukiyo-e* artists in alphabetical order in the catalogue with no regard for chronology. At the time of the Fifth Exposition in 1892, however, he placed the artists in chronological order using more or less the same table as the one he developed for the 1890 exhibition catalogue.27

26 Catalogues by Leroux employing this system of periodization include those for the Burty Collection auction (1891), the Georges Appert Collection auction (1892), the Taigny Collection auction (1893), and the Clemenceau Collection auction (1894).
Identifying the Exhibited Works and General Tendencies in the Exhibits

One of the main aims of this special issue is to identify as many of the huge number of works on display as we can, thus enabling readers to vicariously enjoy an experience similar to that of exhibition visitors at the time. Here, we would like to briefly explain the process and methods which we employed to identify the works exhibited at the École des Beaux-Arts.

Obviously, our most valuable key was the two-part list of exhibits in the exhibition catalogue. In Part II of the catalogue, the *Catalogue des Livres et des Recueils* (Catalogue of Books and Albums), the original Japanese titles of the books were simply transliterated into Roman script, making identification extremely easy. On the other hand, Part I of the catalogue, *Estampes* (Prints), does not provide titles, but the editor’s impressions of each work and descriptions of its motifs and composition, making identification extremely difficult in many cases. Nevertheless, since these catalogue descriptions concisely but accurately capture the distinctive features of the works, they often provided us with sufficient information to identify the exhibits. For example, there can be no doubt that the description for Exhibit No.129b (*Estampes*), “Child mischievously putting ribbons in his sleeping sister’s hair in front of tea utensils,” refers to Harunobu’s *Tea Stand in an Evening Rain*, from the series *Zashiki hakkei* 坐舎 八景 (*Eight Views of a Family’s Living Room*).

The collections of several of the collectors who lent works to the 1890 exhibition were later sold at auction. The auction catalogues put together for these occasions, as well as descriptions in exhibition reviews of the era, likewise provided valuable information for making conclusive identifications. The exhibition not only presented woodblock prints but also brush paintings mounted as hanging scrolls (*kakemono*). In his book *Outamaro: le Peintre des Maisons Vertes* (1891), Edmond de Goncourt describes a *kakemono* by Utamaro from Bing’s collection, which he saw at the exhibition, as follows: “It depicts the gracefully rendered figure of a woman raising both arms in the air to hang a mosquito net above a child lying on its back on the floor, its legs in the air.”

The exhibition posters designed by Jules Chéret included the word *KAKÉMONOS*. The *kakemono* by Utagawa Kuniyoshi used for the poster design, *Woman Reading a Letter* (Fig. 6), is believed to have been on display at the exhibition.
A work matching this description may be found in the Bing Collection auction catalogue, along with a reproduction (Fig. 11). Unfortunately, however, it is still unclear whether or not this work by Utamaro is actually listed in the Beaux-Arts exhibition catalogue.


30 Unfortunately, however, it is still unclear whether or not this work by Utamaro is actually listed in the Beaux-Arts exhibition catalogue.
We have been able to identify nearly 300 works, but, for understandable reasons, this paper only allows us to discuss the works we judged to be of the greatest importance and interest. These selected works, comprising roughly 17% of the total number of exhibits, are listed at the end of this issue. In addition, for the same reasons we have omitted the descriptions of works in auction catalogues and exhibition reviews which enabled us to conclusively identify them. For detailed data on these matters, as well as the full particulars of the identified works, please consult the complete list on the Brill website.

The exhibition systematically encompassed virtually every school of ukiyo-e, from the Torii, Okumura, Katsukawa, Utagawa and Katsushika schools to Kamigata ukiyo-e 上方浮世絵 from the Osaka-Kyoto area. From the viewpoint of today's ukiyo-e studies, the exhibition's more than 1,000 works constitute a veritable survey of ukiyo-e prints.

Many of the illustrated books featured in Part II of the catalogue, the Catalogue des Livres et des Recueils, were not the work of ukiyo-e artists. A wide variety of Japanese books were displayed, from gafu 画譜 (illustrated albums) and collections of humorous kyōka 狂歌 poetry, to historical studies, and works of popular morality. They range from an early Edo-period edition of Ise Monogatari 伊勢物語 (The Tales of Ise), published in 1608, to the memorial album Ikuyo Kagami 幾世かがみ (also known as Kiyo Kagami), which was printed in 1869, immediately after the Meiji Restoration. In this way, the exhibition can be said to have provided a historical overview not only of ukiyo-e, but also of roughly 260 years of Edo-period (1603–1868) publishing culture.

In regard to the number of works per artist, works by Hokusai and Utamaro far outnumbered those of any of the others. This is probably a reflection of their popularity at the time. There appears to have been a tendency to favor works of a beautiful and tranquil style, with depictions of flowers and birds 花鳥画 (kachōga), the gorgeous prints of the Hokusai school being particularly prominent. The exhibition is also characterized by a taste for works which combine the beautiful with the unusual. Examples of this include Utamaro's Takashima Ohisa 高嶌おひさ and Naniwaya Okita 難波屋おきた ("Teahouse serving girl seen from front and back." Printed on both sides. Estampes No. 409・410), in which the front view of a woman is printed on one side and the rear view on the other side of the paper.

On the other hand, it seems that types of ukiyo-e such as omocha-e 玩具絵 (pictures for children), muzan-e 無残絵 (pictures depicting scenes of bloodshed) and Yokohama-e 横浜絵 (pictures depicting westerners) were not displayed. Moreover, there were hardly any shunga 春画 (erotic prints), even though they form an essential part of any discussion of ukiyo-e. So far, we have only been able to determine the presence of the 1687 enpon 艶本 (illustrated
erotic book) Sanze aishō no makura (Conjugal Pillows for Past, Present and Future) by Moronobu (Catalogue Part II, No. 24).

5 The Exhibition Venue – Salle Melpomène

The largest room on the ground floor at the École des Beaux-Arts, called the Salle Melpomène, the entrance hall and the room above it served as the exhibition venue (Figs 12 and 13). A large torii 鳥居 (Shintō shrine gate), painted bright red, was set up at the entrance to the venue. This torii, which was decorated with Japanese flags, is said to have been truly eye-catching.31

It is possible to partially reconstruct the scene inside the exhibition venue based on review articles from the period.32 The walls of the Salle Melpomène were completely covered in woodblock prints. A white curtain hung from the exhibition hall’s ceiling softened the sunlight streaming into the room. The Turkish red of the lower parts of the room’s cyma moulding was covered in thin bluish cloth, creating a more gentle hue. It is clear that much care was given to an unimpeded appreciation of the works.

The ground floor featured a large Buddhist picture by Katsukawa Shunei 勝川春英 (1762–1819) and books of sketches by Hokusai, with woodblock prints by this master taking up a particularly large corner of the exhibition hall. The names of the artists were not posted with the exhibits, so viewers had to check the catalogue to see who the artists were.33 Glass cases set in the center of the large room displayed drawings and preliminary sketches on which the prints were based, helping visitors to understand the process of woodblock printing. In his technical manual on woodblock printing, the engraver Jules Adeline


mentions that tools used by the Japanese for woodblock printing and carving were also on display.34

Two bronze sculptures of dragons stood at the foot of the staircase leading to the upper floor. In the ground floor entrance hall, facing the Quai Malaquais, woodblock prints and hand drawings were exhibited together with albums and brush paintings in glass cases. The painting of monkeys by Sosen, mentioned earlier, was displayed at the entrance to the room on the first floor. According to the critic Teodor de Wyzewa (1862–1917), *kakemono* by Katsukawa Shunsho 勝川春章 (1726?–1792), Utamaro and Hokusai were presented right from the entrance hall, and masterful works by every *ukiyo-e* artist could be seen on the upper floor. Woodblock print-related exhibits on that floor ranged from illustrated books by Moronobu and Hanabusa Itchō 英一蝶 (1652–1724) to quickly-sketched croquis by Keisai Eisen 溪斎英泉 (1791–1848).35 In addition, bronze sculptures were displayed at various points in the exhibition venue, along with an ornate Japanese palanquin, which was brought back from Japan by the Interior Minister Ernest Constans (1833–1913).36

6 The Role of Collectors

Generally confined to a list on the first page of a catalogue, the names of the members of the organizing committee, who were also the collectors associated with the exhibition, were this time prominently displayed on the posters on the walls of Paris. This gesture not only revealed the origins of the whole enterprise, but was also an acknowledgement of the importance of the collectors and a measure of the exhibition's success.

Siegfried Bing, merchant, collector, editor, and expert, wished to promote Japanese graphic art, the last of the Japanese arts to become widely known beyond Asia. In the opening lines of the catalogue's preface he wrote: “It is but a few years ago that Japanese engraving was unknown to us. It was the last of a series of revelations. It has taken no less than two centuries for the Land of the Rising Sun to disclose the last secrets of an antique civilization which has grown in silence and isolation.”37 This exhibition, the very first large-scale exhibition in France devoted to *ukiyo-e* prints, therefore also had an educational purpose. Bing not only sought to create an awareness of the delicate aesthetics

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36 “Aux Beaux-Arts,” p. 3.
37 Siegfried Bing, “Exposition de la gravure japonaise,” p. xi.
of ukiyo-e, but also to illuminate the development of wood-block printing techniques – hence his chronological categorization in the catalogue. The history of ukiyo-e was further highlighted through the two sections of the exhibition: “prints” and “illustrated books and albums.”

Bing had been involved in numerous exchanges with Japan. Belonging to a family that had been engaged in porcelain manufacture and the luxury goods trade for several generations, he had abandoned ceramics production in 1875 in order to devote himself to the sale of objects from the Far East. He opened his first boutique at 19, Rue Chauchat in 1878, the year of the Universal Exposition, to which he was a prominent lender.

The organizing committee of the Beaux-Arts exhibition comprised art connoisseurs from various backgrounds. They were the first generation of japonistes and included literary figures and art critics such as Edmond de Goncourt, Philippe Burty, and Louis Gonse. Art critic Roger Marx was also a committee member, but was not among the lenders.

Henri Vever, the eminent jeweler, represented the ‘creators,’ whereas Henri Bouilhet and Charles Gillot represented the artisan-engineers, as the former was associated with the Christofle silverware firm and the latter had developed the zinc plate chemical photoengraving process known as gillotage, which was used for Bing’s journal, Le Japon artistique and for the lavishly-illustrated exhibition catalogue. (Fig. 14)

The committee also featured well-known political figures and individuals with prominent institutional roles. The list of committee members includes Georges Clemenceau, a member of parliament at the time, and Antonin

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41 On Roger Marx, see Catherine Méneux, (ed.), Roger Marx, un critique aux côtés de Gallé, Monet, Rodin, Gauguin, exh. cat. (Nancy: Musée des Beaux-Arts and Musée de l’École de Nancy, 2006).

42 Deputy for Paris in 1871 and also from 1876 to 1893; President of the Council of Ministers (1906–1909, and again 1917–1920), Minister of the Interior (1906–1909) and Minister of War (1917–1920). On Clemenceau and Japanese art, see Aurélie Samuel, Matthieu Séguéla, and Amina Taha-Hussein Okada, (eds), Clemenceau, le Tigre et l’Asie, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée
Proust, the Secretary of State for the Arts. Edmond Taigny, the Master of Requests at the Council of State and a member of the international jury for the 1867 Paris World’s Fair, was also a noteworthy committee member. Some of the collectors mentioned above also occupied important positions on art councils.

Finally, two important Paris institutions, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the Musée Guimet, were also asked to contribute; the former curated an embryonic collection of Japanese prints in 1887 that had been lent by Bing.43

All of the persons mentioned in the committee members list were associated in various significant ways with the Japonisme movement that swept over the west at the end of the 19th century, with the exception of the gallery director E. L. Montefiore and the painter Charles Tillot, whose Japonisme was only barely detectable in his works.

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43 Twenty-three woodcuts by Kiyonaga, Utamaro, Hokusai, and Hiroshige (Musée des Arts Décoratifs inventory nos. 3852 to 3874)
Bing was the initiator of this event that displayed 725 woodcuts and 428 illustrated books and albums, selected from the portfolios of first- and second-generation Parisian collectors of Japanese art. These 1153 remarkable items testified to his determination to promote the discovery of the diversity of Japanese visual art.

The Japanese Print Exhibition in the Context of Beaux-Arts
Exhibition History

The selection of the École des Beaux-Arts as the venue for a Japanese art show had symbolic significance in that it indicated ‘official recognition’ of Japanese art by the government of France. The Salle Melpomène at the Beaux-Arts was mainly used for the Envois de Rome exhibitions (featuring work sent by French artists who had won a scholarship to study at the Académie de France in Rome) or for retrospectives of work by French masters such as Flandrau, Ingres, Delacroix and Bastien-Lepage. Some journalists noted the public’s surprise that an exhibition of Japanese art would be held at such an illustrious venue.44 In fact, approval to use the venue was granted thanks to the intercession of Georges Clemenceau.45 The show constituted the first-ever exhibition of foreign art at the Beaux-Arts, and without any doubt greatly contributed to the status of Japanese art in France.

Moreover, it is highly significant that an exhibition not of paintings or sculptures but mainly of prints – a ‘minor art’ – was held at a central institution of French art academicism. The 1890 show was the first graphic arts exhibition to be held there, and it built the foundation for further exhibitions at the Beaux-Arts, including a lithograph exhibition in 1891, an etching exhibition in 1896, and an exhibition devoted to woodblock prints in 1902. The 1891 lithograph exhibition, in particular, seems to have been modeled after the Japan exhibition of the previous year. Similarities can be seen in the historical outline in the catalogue preface by Henri Beraldi (1849–1931), in the way the works were arranged by artist in chronological order, and in the fact that nearly 1,000 works were exhibited.46 The École des Beaux-Arts also hosted a number of subse-

quent Japanese art exhibitions, for instance the 1900 Exposition des Maîtres Japonais, presenting 265 *kakemono*. In the preface to the exhibition catalogue, Gustave Geffroy mentions the great Japanese prints show which was held in the same room ten years earlier, and writes that the present *kakemono* exhibition will provide a similarly valuable opportunity for visitors to appreciate Japanese art.47 At the woodblock print show of 1902, 266 Japanese illustrated books and *ukiyo-e* prints were displayed alongside western woodblock prints.48

8 Bing’s Promotion of *Ukiyo-e* through Exhibitions

In order to appeal to an audience beyond the Japanese art lovers who visited his gallery, Bing exhibited *ukiyo-e* on a variety of occasions from the late 1880s onward. In December 1887, for instance, Japanese woodblock prints from Bing’s collection were displayed at the Henri Guérard (1846–1897) solo exhibition held at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune.49 Bing held his first *ukiyo-e*-centered exhibition at his own gallery from May to June 1888, presenting a total of 160 artworks.50 In October of the same year, Bing took part in the Third Exposition Internationale de Blanc et Noir, exhibiting 18 *kakemono* and 49 *ukiyo-e* from his personal collection.51 In the same year, William Anderson exhibited a total of 662 *ukiyo-e* and illustrated books printed from woodblocks at London’s Burlington Fine Arts Club. It was perhaps this show and its accompanying catalogue which inspired Bing to hold his own large-scale exhibition and compile a similar catalogue.52 The following year, in 1889, Bing held an exhibition of Japanese pictorial art in Brussels with the help of the collector Edmond Michotte (1831–1914). 36 *kakemono* and 108 *ukiyo-e* were displayed on this occasion, and Bing also took the opportunity to sell artworks to Belgian art museums and other buyers.53

50 *Exposition historique de l’art de la gravure au Japon* (Paris: 1888). A copy of this rare catalogue is housed in the Musée Grobet-Labadié, Marseille. We would like to thank Françoise Fournier for sending us a photocopy.
52 Anderson, *Catalogue of Prints and Books Illustrating the History of Engraving in Japan*.
53 *Cercle artistique & littéraire de Bruxelles. Exposition de peinture & d’estampe japonaises*
The above overview of these prior shows makes clear just how unprecedented the 1890 École des Beaux-Arts *ukiyo-e* exhibition was in terms of scale. The cooperation of individual collectors is particularly significant in the light of the fact that many of these personal collections, including those of Burty, Clemenceau, Taigny, Montefiore, Proust and Goncourt, were auctioned off in rapid succession in the 1890s. Bing succeeded in assembling these prominent collectors’ artworks under one roof, providing the one and only irreplaceable opportunity for them to actually be seen together before they were auctioned off and dispersed forever. In this way, Bing’s promotion of *ukiyo-e*, which was begun in earnest two years earlier, culminated and came to fruition in the 1890 exhibition. The success of Bing’s endeavor is evident in the subsequent *ukiyo-e* collecting boom in France, in which a new generation of collectors and art museum curators actively purchased works at auctions from 1890 onward.54

The exhibitions at which Bing displayed *ukiyo-e* in 1888 and 1889 included little or no work by artists of *ukiyo-e*’s First and Second Periods such as Moronobu, Kiyonobu, Okumura Masanobu 奥村政信 (1686–1764), Nishikawa Sukenobu 西川祐信 (1671–1750), Itchō, Ishikawa Toyonobu 石川豊信 (1711–1785) and Torii Kiyomitsu 鳥居清満 (1735–1785). In contrast, works by these artists assumed a far larger presence at the 1890 exhibition where, for example, 24 woodblock prints and illustrated books by Moronobu, 14 by Masanobu, 16 by Sukenobu, and 10 by Kiyomitsu were exhibited. In this way, the French general public received its first full-scale introduction to works by artists from *ukiyo-e*’s “primitive period.” Utamaro, whose work had received increasing acclaim, mainly in France and Britain, from the final years of the 1880s, was comparatively well-represented at the three exhibitions held in 1888 and 1889. However, with a total of 101 woodblock prints and illustrated books on display, Utamaro’s works were second only to Hokusai’s in number at the 1890 Beaux-Arts exhibition.55 The show was probably responsible for bringing Utamaro’s popularity to its peak, with works by the artist fetching high prices at the Burty Collection auction in 1891. Woodblock prints of the 19th century had previously been

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widely thought to constitute the artistic peak of *ukiyo-e* history, but the attention Bing gave to earlier artists, such as Utamaro, helped to bring about a gradual change in this view.

The growing enthusiasm for collecting *ukiyo-e* in the west also had an energizing effect on the activities of *ukiyo-e* dealers in Japan. One such dealer, Kobayashi Bunshichi 小林文七 (1862–1923), held an *ukiyo-e* exhibition in Ueno, Tokyo, in 1892. In the preface to the exhibition catalogue, the art dealer Hayashi Tadamasa 林忠正 (1853–1906) refers to the Beaux-Arts exhibition as follows: “The École des Beaux-Arts in Paris is a highly rigorous academic institution. Nevertheless, approval was granted for an exhibition of Japanese *ukiyo-e* to be held in its Palais des Études the year before last. This constituted the first occasion for Japanese art to be welcomed to the Beaux-Arts.”

Bing’s efforts did not end with the 1890 exhibition. During the first half of the 1890s, he not only organized sales exhibitions with items from his own collection in Paris, but also in London, New York, and Boston, actively using exhibitions as promotional venues for *ukiyo-e*. The 1890 exhibition, too, can be viewed as part of this promotional framework.

9 The Japanese Prints Exhibition in the Press

Over 60 texts referring to the exhibition appeared in the press. Apart from journalists, authors included art critics, scholars, artists, and individuals involved in the show, such as Roger Marx and the collector Paul de Boissy. Types of articles range from short notices to extensive explorations of Japanese pictorial art.

In general, reviews were favorable. Some critics called the show a “revelation.” The exhibition catalogue was often praised, and Bing’s preface was quoted repeatedly. Articles pointed to common features such as the wide range of the subject matter, harmony of color, the decorative quality of the forms, clean and nimble linework, lack of perspective, and aspects of humor and caricature. Authors’ attention was also attracted by the collaboration of painter, carver and printer within the creative process, as well as by the fact that the painter was held in highest regard.

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57 For details on the critical reception of the *ukiyo-e* exhibition and bibliographical references, see Tatsuya Saito’s contribution to this issue.
Among the artists on display, Hokusai was most extensively discussed, followed by Hiroshige and Utamaro who also received frequent mention. Since early artists such as Moronobu, Harunobu and Kiyonaga, were more or less new to the French public, reviews showed a keen interest in *ukiyo-e* artists of the 17th and 18th centuries. On the other hand, writers frequently pointed out that Japanese art had experienced a steady decline since the start of the Meiji period (1868–1912).

There was also some harsh criticism of Japanese art. Some writers expressed the opinion that Japanese art dealt almost exclusively with commonplace and vulgar subjects, and lacked both ideals and the creative stance to produce art of moral or spiritual merit. Moreover, some expressed misgivings about the Japanese influence on western art, as well as about the current wave of Japanomania.

The review articles provide valuable information on the exhibition. A number of them include concrete descriptions of how the woodblock prints and *kakemono* were displayed at the Salle Melpomène, making it possible for us to partially reconstruct the layout of the show. In addition, the articles’ descriptions of the exhibits have enabled us to identify some of the works on display.

10 Artists who Visited the 1890 Exhibition

The 1890 exhibition was visited by more artists than any previous western exhibition of Japanese art, and is believed to have inspired many of them.\(^{58}\) As previously mentioned, Camille Pissarro referred to a painting by Mori Sosen in a letter to his son Georges. Edgar Degas (1834–1917) also visited the exhibition. In a letter to the sculptor Albert Bartholomé (1848–1928) he wrote, “Japanese exhibition at the Beaux Arts. A fireman’s helmet on a frog. Alas! Alas! taste everywhere.”\(^{59}\)

The Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt was perhaps most directly inspired by the exhibition.\(^{60}\) Immediately after seeing it, she created ten color aquatints strongly influenced by Utamaro’s work (Fig. 15). She exhibited them at Paul

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58 Though he provides no evidence to support his claim, Klaus Berger names 30 artists who visited the *ukiyo-e* exhibition. These include Claude Monet, Paul Gauguin, Odilon Redon, Giuseppe de Nittis, Eugène Grasset, Alfons Mucha and Edvard Munch. See Klaus Berger, *Japonisme in Western Painting from Whistler to Matisse*, trans. David Britt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 188.


60 For information on Cassatt’s color aquatints, see Nancy Mowll Mathews and Barbara Stern Shapiro (eds), *Mary Cassatt: The Color Prints*, exh. cat. (Washington D.C.: National
Durand-Ruel’s gallery in 1891. Cassatt excitedly wrote about her impressions of the 1890 exhibition in a letter to Berthe Morisot: “You could come and dine here with us and afterwards we could go to see the Japanese prints at the Beaux-Arts. Seriously, you must not miss that. You who want to make color prints you couldn’t dream of anything more beautiful. I dream of it and don’t think of anything else but color on copper. Fantin was there the 1st day I went and was in ecstacy. I saw Tissot there who also is occupied with the problem of making color prints.”61 From her correspondence with Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898) it is known that Morisot also visited the exhibition.62 Cassatt’s letter is also of note in that it testifies to the fact that Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904) and

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James Tissot (1836–1902) visited the exhibition on its first day and had a strong interest in color prints.63

Painters of the younger generation also visited the exhibition. The art critic Arsène Alexandre (1859–1937) recalled seeing it with the painter Paul Signac (1863–1935), saying, "We spent a long time looking at the landscapes by Hiroshige."64 There is also a possibility that Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), who died in July 1890, saw the exhibition. In a letter dated May 10, 1890 the artist’s younger brother Theo (1857–1891) writes, “There's an exhibition of Japanese drawings and prints which you'll see when you come, which is superb.”65 However, it is not certain whether van Gogh actually visited the exhibition.66 In a letter addressed to Roger Marx, the Nancy artist Émile Gallé (1846–1904), best known for his work in glass, writes of his plans to attend: “I have been intending to go to Paris next week to see the three exhibitions there, including Bing’s to my great delight.”67

Even in cases where direct documentary evidence is lacking, we may presume that many of the artists who took up the medium of color prints in the 1890s saw the exhibition.68 The exhibition was no doubt an impetus to the creative trend which led to the flowering of color prints in France in the 1890s. The

63 While Nancy Mowll Mathews’ transcription of Cassatt’s letter contains the name “Fantin,” the name is changed to “Lautrec” in the correspondence collection edited by Olivier Daulte and Manuel Dupertuis. We compared the writing of Cassatt’s original letter, housed in the Musée Marmottan, with her other correspondence and concluded that “Fantin” is correct. We would like to thank Claire Gooden for granting permission to examine these documents.


timing of the exhibition was just right, since Henri Rivière and Auguste Lepère (1849–1918) who had been making color woodblock prints since the late 1880s, and the Société des Peintres-Graveurs français, founded in 1889, actively aimed at elevating the status of the print medium in France. From 1890 onward, Pierre Bonnard (1867–1947), Maurice Denis (1870–1943), Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901) and other artists produced color lithograph posters, while André Marty (1857–?) included many Japonisme color prints in his L’Estampe Originale series which began publication in 1893. In this way, color woodblock prints, lithographs and etchings, of which the above are only a few examples, flourished in France in the 1890s. There is no doubt that the 1890 exhibition was one of the triggers behind this major trend.

11 Possibilities for Further Research

This introduction provides a brief overview of the preparations, contents, lenders and contemporary reception of Bing’s 1890 exhibition. Some of these matters will be examined in further detail in the articles that follow. The exhibition’s influence on the art world and other fields requires more investigation, and can only be touched upon briefly here. However, the data provided by this special issue of the *Journal of Japonisme* will be able to serve as a basis for further research. For example, the study of individual artists and critics could contribute to a clearer overall picture of the long-term effects of the exhibition and its general impact.

The full online list of exhibits not merely tells us what was displayed at the event. Since the list also includes the names of the collectors who lent items to the exhibition, it provides an insight into the position of Japanese art on the Paris art market at that time. We plan to regularly update this online database in the future.

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