



Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art Since 1858

Siegfried Wichmann

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"An important phase in the history of decorative arts is here given authoritative treatment."—*Interior Design*

The impact of Japan on Western art was as immediate and almost as cataclysmic as the influence of the West on Japanese life. After Commodore Perry opened Japan's door to the outside world in 1858—ending a 200-year period of total isolation—a wealth of visual information from the superb Japanese traditions of ceramics, metalwork, architecture, printmaking, and painting reached the West and brought with it electrifying new ideas of composition, color, and design.

One has only to see a celebrated painting by Monet, Degas, Whistler, or van Gogh, a print by Toulouse-Lautrec, an Art Nouveau glass vase, or a lacquered hair comb side by side with its Japanese source to see how these ideas have inspired European artists. Nor is the influence a superficial one: Japanese conventions of symbolism underlie the use of decorative motifs in European Symbolism and Art Nouveau, and the Zen idea of spontaneity is the ultimate source of both the apparently capricious shapes of Art Nouveau objects and the development of an abstract "calligraphy" in Abstract Expressionism.

Siegfried Wichmann, the acknowledged expert on Japonisme, accompanies the breathtaking illustrations with a text that organizes a wealth of detail and opens up new lines of inquiry. 1,105 illustrations, 243 in color.

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