

Chapter 13

Nude art, censorship and modernity in Japan

From the ‘Knickers Incident’ of 1901 to now

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This chapter will explore particular issues of taste relating to nudity and sexuality in the gallery, but also in the street and the home from early twentieth to early twenty-first century Japan. I should like to focus first on the so-called ‘Knickers Incident’ (*Koshimaki jiken*) of 1901 involving a nude painting by the artist Seiki Kuroda.¹ This case not only shows the complex nature of the impact of European ideas on Japanese culture, but also how the relationship of taste and obscenity in modern Japan is layered, complicated and fluid.² Censorship for obscenity was not unknown during the previous Edo period, but on the whole the authorities were not overtly strict on such matters.³ With the onset of the Meiji period from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the new government saw the urgent necessity of modernising the legal system relating to obscenity in Japan.

The first combatant in our story is Toshiyoshi Kawaji, who went to Europe from 1872 to 1873 and on his return set up the basis for Japan’s modern police system. He was later to become the Head of Police. What Kawaji learnt from the powerful French police system was the shifting of responsibility for the maintenance of law and order from the military to the police. (Obinata 1990, 471–472) The police’s central role became the control of the citizen’s daily life based on prevention. The Administrative Police Regulation of 1875 specified stopping debauchery and obscenity as one of the four main duties of the police. (Yui and Obinata 1990, 320)

The tentative and initially quite uncertain police system had consolidated its power by the 1890s. One of the new challenges faced by the Japanese police censors at this time was the display of nudes, the exposure of actual nudity in public and the publication of nude images. The government was particularly sensitive to Western criticism of the prevalence of nudity in public places as uncivilised. A new bylaw, Ishiki

Keii Jôrei, was introduced in Tokyo in 1872 regulating in detail the extent of nudity allowable in public. (Kitazawa 1994, 363; Ogi *et al.* 1990, 3–39) This must have been a quite alien regulation for the majority of the Japanese. The records from 1876 show that for *ishikizai* (intentional crime) the top offence against the new bylaw was that of nudity, which included being naked from the waist up, including rickshaw men, with 2091 cases, whereas those punished for selling pornography amounted to only 8 cases. In 1877 there were 3179 offences for nudity and in 1878 a staggering 7545. (Ogi *et al.* 1990, 468, 27)

The publication of popular nude images increased greatly during the early Meiji period. Lithographs of nude images in particular became so popular during the 1880s that they were prohibited in 1889 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, not because of their pornographic nature but on the grounds that they corrupted public morals (*fûzoku kairan*). (Teshigawara 1986, 91–94; Miyashita 1992, 264–266; Kinoshita 2015, 184, 191 note 25) This prohibition was not just confined to lithographs but extended more generally to published images of nude women. There was little interest in images of nude men by either publishers or the police. (Kojima 2002, 34, 42–43; Kinoshita 2012)

It is clear that many nude lithographs were displayed very openly at the front of shops, which attracted the attention of the police. There were even threats of prosecution for nude items not for sale but displayed prominently in the shop. (Nakamura 1981, 64) In my view it was the public nature of these nude images which was so offensive to the authorities, for some of the reminiscences of what people actually felt about these lithographic images indicate that they were not seen as pornographic, but rather as a very fresh type of image of beautiful women (*bijinga*). (Teshigawara 1986, 93–94) However, from the point of view of the authorities, so sensitive to public nudity, such public display was not tolerable. Here we can see that the Japanese authorities were extending the Western ideology of hostility to public nudity to the public display of images of nudity. One can see that the time was ripe for the police to intervene in a display of nude images at a public exhibition.

I should like to introduce our second combatant. Seiki Kuroda was perhaps the most powerful *yôga* (Western-style) painter of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and has been called ‘the father of modern Japanese painting in the Western

manner'. He belonged to an elite family and when he was eighteen, went to Paris to study law, but once there decided to become a painter and stayed there for ten years. The first key painting here is his *Chôshô* (The Morning Toilette, originally titled *Le Lever*).

TAKE IN FIGURE 13.1

It is clear that Kuroda was most ambitious and aimed to create a work of art which would attain the highest aesthetic category of its type.⁴ His ambition moved the Japanese Minister in Paris, Yasushi Nomura, to sponsor this painting and to provide cost and the use of a room in his Legation as a studio in return for the completed painting. Once completed, Kuroda took it to his teacher, Raphael Collin, who said he should show it to the famous painter Puvis de Chavannes, the head of Société National des Beaux-Arts. When, Kuroda asked whether the painting was worthy to be submitted to the Salon of Société, Puvis apparently answered 'Certainement'. (Teshigawara 1986, 135) This episode and the subsequent acceptance of the work by the 1893 Salon of the Société National des Beaux-Arts are important as these gave Kuroda the imprimatur of Western authority.

With this and other successful results he came back to Japan in the same year. A year later in 1894 together with Keiichirô Kume, a close friend from his Paris days, he established *Tenshin Dôjô*, a private art school, which became the focal point of a new direction in *yôga* painting in Japan. Then in 1896 when the Department of Western-style Painting was established at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, Kuroda was invited to become the leading teacher there. In 1898 he was appointed Professor and became the most powerful figure within the world of *yôga* education.

After his nearly ten-year stay in Paris, the first major Japanese exhibition Kuroda participated in was the sixth Meiji Bijutsukai (Meiji Art Society) Exhibition in Tokyo, where he showed oil paintings including *Chôshô*. This painting now lost, was positively reviewed and was again exhibited next year in 1895 at the fourth Naikoku Kangyô Hakurankai (Domestic Industrial Exposition) in Kyoto where it received a prize, Myôgi Nitôshô, a second prize in this category. However, once this large painting was shown

to the general public, all hell broke loose. Many newspapers accused the painting of obscenity and ugliness. The ferocity of some of these criticisms is quite startling. Apparently, the controversy had already started at the jury stage, but Ryûichi Kuki, the head of the jury and a highly influential bureaucrat, insisted that this work should be exhibited.

It is clear that Kuroda intentionally confronted the Japanese art world and the Japanese public with this provocative nude painting. The big difference between Kuroda and most of the other *yôga* painters in Japan was that he was not encumbered with the previous history of *yôga* in Japan and could take a more openly Western line reflecting contemporary taste there. As he spent nearly ten years in France, he was very well attuned to what was going on in the European art world.

This shows in his choice of the subject of *Chôshô*. For a painter of the highest level of ambition, nude painting of this type offered many advantages. For a Japanese artist trying to represent the highest level of Western culture this was a fitting subject, not only with a long and weighty tradition, but also with a great deal of currency. In Europe then nude painting was one of the most prominent types of painting to be seen at exhibitions. At the many International Exhibitions the nation-based display encouraged competition and this enhanced the status of the nude painting.⁵ Many contemporary nude paintings in Europe were negotiating with past values to attain current aesthetic status and Kuroda's *Chôshô* was part of this phenomenon. In his painting the narrative aspect is reduced and the aestheticism of the female nude comes to the fore. The nude dominates the composition and becomes the central object for the viewer's gaze. Within the context of the French Salon Kuroda's work satisfies fully the contemporary requirement for a 'masterpiece'.

This modernity of Kuroda's work was of vital importance within the Japanese context. The establishment of the notion of *bijutsu* (art) in Japan crucially impinged on the debate about the nude painting.⁶ The 1880s was exactly the time when finally the Western notion of Fine Art gained greater currency in Japan, but there was still considerable uncertainty among the general public. Kuroda's *Chôshô* was his challenge to the general public to establish what art is and this challenge was indeed taken up by many of the critics.⁷

It is also important to note that when *Chôshô* was shown first at the more exclusive White Horse Society exhibition no such controversy broke out. It did so only when a year later it was shown at the Domestic Industrial Exposition where Western-style paintings formed only a small part of the exhibits and a great number of general public came to visit the Exposition, not just the elite aficionados. Therefore, the exposure *Chôshô* received here was incomparably greater than at the previous exhibition for art elites. It was simply more public. The general public's bewilderment in being confronted by this painting was probably genuine. They were not used to such a public display of nudity. The 'high art<th>=<th> nude' formula was not yet part of their shared taste. On the other hand, the insistence by Kuki, the head of jury, on protecting this painting was very much part of the top-down process of the establishment of the notion of Fine Art in Japan and also showed that this formula was part of Kuki's shared values.

In this context, it is worth noting that in general we now tend to see this type of nude painting as representing a typically patriarchal ideology. However, it has been argued that by painting a woman as she is rather than as an idealised stereotype of 'a good wife and a wise mother', Kuroda questioned the prevailing view in Japan and offered an alternative where an undistorted image of a woman is presented and where through such an image the fundamental beauty is explored. (Teshigawara 1986, 122) Support for such a view comes from an unexpected corner. Apparently the pioneer feminist Raichô Hiratsuka approved of nude painting as representing some element of the primeval freedom of women. (Teshigawara 1986, 175)

Then in 1897 Kuroda exhibited the highly unusual *Chi Kan Jô* (Wisdom Impression Sentiment) at the second Hakubakai (White Horse Society) exhibition in Tokyo. This triptych contains three Japanese female nudes in front of an abstract gold background. Again, there were many criticisms relating to the nudes. So far in spite of the many hostile views expressed in the media, there were no interventions from the authorities. The first censorship did not relate directly to anything Kuroda had exhibited, but to a magazine which illustrated Kuroda's triptych indicating that the censor viewed such a publication as a more public medium. The November issue (no. 2) of *Bijutsu Hyôron* (Art Review) was banned by the authorities, because it carried a photograph of

Kuroda's work, though when *Nikkan Kyoto* (Kyoto Daily) published another photograph on 1 January next year, this was not censored.⁸ The triptych was then shown at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris as part of the display of contemporary Japanese painting and was awarded a Silver Medal, the only Japanese Western-style painting to receive a medal. (Tan'ō 1992, 262)

Then, in 1901, one of Kuroda's nude paintings became the target of one of the most notorious acts of art censorship in modern Japan. When Kuroda exhibited *Ratai Fujinzō* (A Female Nude Figure) at the sixth White Horse Society exhibition in Tokyo, the police ordered the lower half of the painting to be covered by a cloth.

TAKE IN FIGURE 13.2

TAKE IN FIGURE 13.3

This became known as Koshimaki Jiken, roughly translated as 'the Knickers Incident'. From 1903 onwards at the White Horse Society exhibitions of nude paintings including Kuroda's were confined by police order to a special room to which only art specialists were allowed access. This became quite a common tactic by the police when dealing with nude paintings at exhibitions. This notorious covering of the lower half of Kuroda's nude painting with a cloth signalled that Fine Art exhibitions were not immune from police censorship. The creation of special 'nude rooms' with access permitted only to art specialists at various exhibitions again underlines my contention that it was the degree of public access which was the key aspect with regard to nude images.

This is even clearer when we examine where this painting ended up after the exhibition. A eureka moment for me was when I came across a photograph of a room of the Takanawa Villa of the Iwasaki family, who bought this painting. (Tamamushi 1998, 63) This photograph shows that this painting was displayed in the billiard room. Traditionally the billiard room was a space exclusively reserved for men, thus the existence of a risqué painting was even appropriate and suitable for such a gendered space.

One of the origins of the censor's aversion to nude images was the interpretation by Western visitors of the prevalence of actual nudity in Japan as uncivilised. Thus the anti-nudity sentiment was not an intrinsically Japanese reaction. In an article written in 1897, Kuroda's friend Kume suggests that the hostility to nudity was very much a Western concept based on Christian doctrine and therefore this was already recognised at the time in Japan. (Kume 1984, 34–35)⁹

We have seen that within the European art context how current Kuroda's nude painting actually was. However, an anti-nude ideology and not just anti-nakedness sentiment was equally current in the West. If we examine the situation in Britain, the 1880s 'saw a shift in public perception of the nude'. (Smith 1996, 216) The social purity movement which did much 'to discredit the nude in the domain of high art' aided by the popular press managed to bring the issue to the fore. (Smith 1996, 220) It is instructive that also in Japan in 1891 Dai Nihon Fûzoku Kairyôkai (The Great Japan Society for the Improvement of Public Morals) was founded by Masatake Doi. (Ogi, Kumakura and Ueno 1990, 471) They are all striving for legitimacy of taste each in their own way. They all take their own as the 'correct' taste.

The sharing of values within a cultural community can be transnational. With regard to nude painting, for instance, Puvis and Kuroda shared similar values, whereas the members of social purity movements in Britain and the members of the Great Japan Society for the Improvement of Public Morals agreed on other values, incompatible with those of the artists. Also, this controversy was not just a clash between aesthetic taste imported from the West and the moralistic views of increasingly xenophobic and nationalistic Japanese critics. Both the anti-nude ideology seen in the 1872 law and the emerging concept of art were Western-oriented. (Kitazawa 1994, 372–373) Here we are seeing not the lure of the East, as often discussed, but the lure of the West.

This was not a clash of Japanese tradition and Western modernity, but a clash of differing interpretations of modernity. The key component of this censorship was not whether the painting was regarded as intrinsically obscene in itself, but whether it was open to public gaze. By this term 'public' was meant lower-class men, women and children, which probably Bourdieu would recognise. The judgement of taste here is indeed related to social position. However, this represents only the point of view of the

police. The censored artist was one of the most respected Western-style painters of the time and was actually a Viscount; his intention was indeed to educate the public to bring them up to the Western standard by showing them nude painting which brings with it Western credentials.

We have seen in our example of the 1901 ‘Knickers Incident’ how a new taste for nude painting was promoted by the artist but suppressed by the police. In the long run, neither side has won the battle. The theme of our volume is the persistence of taste. What seems to be persistent in our context is not the content of the taste, but the skirmishes between the artists and the police. It looks like the nude painting has won as it became much more ubiquitous at exhibitions and in publications. However, more recently, particularly female, nude paintings are attacked from a different quarter and are becoming less generally accepted from the point of view of gender politics. The public display of female nudity is now seen by many as a kind of objectification of a female body. Also globally life classes are becoming obsolete in many art academies, though persisting more strongly in extra-mural drawing classes. One would have thought that the Japanese police would not now censor depiction of a nude, but this is in fact not the case. Female nudes where genitalia are not hidden are still contentious and subject to censorship by the police, as we will see later.

We have examined a case where the female nude was censored. How about the censorship of the male nude? This is a much less debated area, but a recent publication *Kokan Wakashû* (Young men with something between their legs [a pun on a famous tenth-century poetry anthology *Kokinwakashû*]) of 2012 written by Naoyuki Kinoshita examines brilliantly and wittily how artists dealt with the issue of revealing or hiding male genitalia, particularly when dealing with male nudes. The book’s subtitle *Otoko no hadaka wa geijutsu ka* (Is male nude art?) exactly pinpoints the second-class status of a male nude within art compared to a female one. Here again the debate focuses on the genitalia, but this too will be examined later.

Let us go back to the issue of police censorship, this time relating to the male nude. Our case here is the 1976 girl’s manga *Kaze to ki no uta* (The Song of the Wind and the Trees) by Keiko Takemiya. This came out initially as a serial in *Shûkan shôjo komikku* (Girl’s Comic Weekly), a magazine mainly for teenage girls. Takemiya was

singled out by the art historian Hitoshi Ônishi as one of the great innovators in the history of book-form art. (Ônishi 1998)¹⁰ He made a point that Takemiya's innovation included a much freer use of compositional structure disrupting the conventional layout of a page. Jaqueline Berndt also points out that Takemiya breaks with the girl's comic convention in the choice of the hair colour of the protagonists, in that the reliable and sensible Serge has black hair and the passionate and suffering Gilbert is blond. (Berndt 1995, 114) Takemiya's innovation in the content of this work was openly depicting what became to be known Boy's Love (BL), i.e. male homosexuality among young boys in a girls' comic magazine. Shûji Terayama, the foremost all-round avant gardiste in Japan at the time, regarded the appearance of this work as seismic as the appearance of *Histoire d'O* or Marquis de Sade's *Justine*. (Terayama 1995, n.p.), declaring that he loves the *fleurs du mal* of these Gothic comics. Boy's Love is now a huge genre in Japanese girls' comics and beyond. After the publication of *Kaze to ki no uta*, Takemiya became one of the leading manga artists in Japan. In 2000 she became Japan's first practice-based Professor of Manga Studies at Kyoto Seika University and four years later she was appointed as the Vice Chancellor of that university.

Takemiya's autobiography *Shônen no na wa jirubêru* (The boy's name is Gilbert) published in 2016 makes it clear how important *Kaze to ki no uta* was for her. In fact, the whole autobiography is written more or less as a story of how she came to publish this work. The issue of sexuality was central for her. Indeed, this graphic novel liberated the art of manga not only as an art form but also as a means of expressing sex in all its ramifications. It covers many highly challenging issues, such as incest or the rape of an eleven-year-old boy.¹¹ As a motivation for this work, Takemiya stated that she wanted to depict love and sex properly and chose male homosexuality to avoid police censorship, as heterosexual bed scenes with entangled male and female legs wouldn't be tolerated in a girls' comic magazine. The first double-page scene taken from the paperback edition shows exactly such a scene, which was indeed not censored by the police.

TAKE IN FIGURE 13.4

Also apparently she was advised by her editor that in a bed scene if you have three legs visible, you will be censored but if there are only two legs, it would be OK! (Takemiya 2016, 115) On any of these scenes, you can see only two legs. Here Takemiya depicted a near full male nude seen from his back, but crucially no male genitals are visible. What is happening here is that at times there are highly detailed but often unwritten rules about where the line is drawn for punishable obscenity. In the case of the 'Knickers Incident', neither the artist nor the police were certain where to draw the line, but in the case of *Kaze to ki no uta*, the artist, the editor of the publishing house and the police were all extremely aware of these unwritten rules and on this occasion these were not infringed. The artist and the editor were successful in negotiating this highly sensitive issue and came out more or less unscathed.

Let us go back to the issue of the role played by the depiction of genitalia in the context of female and male nude. Throughout the history of the censorship of nude art in Japan, depictions of genitalia played a major role. An extreme example for a case involving female genitalia is the artwork created by the artist Rokudenashiko (Megumi Igarashi). 'Rokudenashiko' could be translated as 'Good for Nothing Girl'. Her art is hardly a nude as it just depicts her own vulva in 3D. When she was arrested the first time on 14 July 2014, over 20,000 signatures demanding her release were collected and she was released. On 3 December 2014 she was rearrested and over 10,000 signatures were collected but this time she was only bailed out. The court's verdict as reported by *Mainichi Shinbun* online news on 9 May 2016 allowed her work to be sold in an adult goods shop but it did censor her commercial activity of sending a 3D printable version through the internet. The same online news reports that she has appealed and the case continues. This is admittedly a current and extreme case where the borderline of obscenity is fought over between the artist and the authorities.

The persistence of these skirmishes continues with another 'Knickers Incident', this time involving male nudes. In 2014, when the artist Ryûdai Takano's photographic work *Ore to* (Together with me) depicting two standing males in frontal nude was exhibited, the police threatened the Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art in Nagoya that if this work was not removed, they had no choice but to arrest the curator.¹²

TAKE IN FIGURE 13.5

Apparently the police took this action based on a single anonymous complaint and the sole reason was the open depiction of penises. If we consult Kinoshita's excellent book *Kokan wakashû*, it is abundantly clear that male genitalia are not rare at all in public sculptures. However, the local police in Nagoya did object to its display. In this case the artist obviously stepped over the delicate line Takemiya was able to negotiate. Possibly this may not have happened in Tokyo and it rather seems the policeman responsible acted somewhat rashly without consultation with the police lawyers. Apparently no formal paper work was created on the police side. This again indicates this was more to do with misguided over-enthusiasm than a carefully considered attempt at censorship. The artist was put in a difficult position, as the arrest target was not he but the museum curator. The sin perceived by the police was not creating an obscene work, but displaying such a work publicly. This is exactly the same reasoning prevalent throughout the history of censoring obscenity in Japan.

The artist said that he had three choices: first, to remove the work from the exhibition; second, to substitute this work with another one more acceptable to the police and pretend nothing had happened; and finally to continue with the display of the work in a way to make it clear that there was this intervention by the police. He chose the third and covered up the lower half of the painting with thin unwoven material following the precedence of Kuroda's case, but this time it was the artist who put up 'knickers'. Some other exhibits were also covered with tracing paper. The artist declared that he wanted to leave a trace of the police intervention and imagined that the figures are wrapped in bedding. This imbued the photograph with a stronger sense of eroticism creating an even more intimate image. It almost reminds us the homoerotic initial scene in *Kaze to ki no uta*.

These were two cases where contemporary Japanese artists suffered direct interventions by the police. However, let us finish on a more positive note. In autumn 2015 and spring 2016 one of the greatest taboos in exhibiting Japanese art was broken. The private museum Eisei Bunko in Tokyo opened an exhibition simply called *Shunga*. Museum visitors in Britain are already quite familiar with this art form, as the British

Museum organised a spectacular exhibition *Shunga: sex and pleasure in Japanese art* in 2013. The catalogue tells us that ‘*Shunga*’ (‘spring pictures’) represents an extraordinary body of explicit erotic art’. (Clark *et al.* 2013, 20) This was a surprisingly popular exhibition and people flocked to it. There was no police intervention. A number of key art historians and curators both in Britain and Japan wanted to organise a similar exhibition in Japan. However, these efforts hit a brick wall. I attended a *Shunga* Display Workshop organised by the Association for the Study of Cultural Resource in December 2013 in Tokyo. This was a rather depressing occasion, as it became clear to me why it was so difficult to organise a *Shunga* exhibition in Japan. Three major obstacles to organise such an exhibition in a public museum of art in Japan could be pointed out. First, public museums of art in Japan are attached to a public body, be it a city, prefecture or a ministry and the bureaucrats of these institutions, especially those involved in education, are unlikely to approve such an exhibition however keen the curator is to do it. Second, Japanese exhibitions are heavily reliant on sponsors and media, such as newspapers or TV stations, and they are unlikely to support such risky projects. A third, hidden obstacle seemed to be the Friends of the Museum, which supports the museum in various ways and would again be unlikely to support such an exhibition. Even a museum director who is an expert in *shunga* seemed to be unable to break this taboo. The issue of a single-themed exhibition on *shunga* seemed to have created these particular difficulties. One or two such prints or paintings to be smuggled into a differently themed exhibition would create less of a problem. A *shunga* exhibition named as such would have been too public.

The break came with the acceptance of such an exhibition by a small private museum, i.e. Eisei Bunko Museum in Tokyo, which is renowned for its collection of mainly Japanese and Asian art collected by the Hosokawa family. In the end it was the decision by the head of the Hosokawa family and President of the Eisei Bunko Museum, Morihiro Hosokawa, which broke the ice. As a former Prime Minister of Japan, it would have been more difficult for the police to move against his decisions and they would certainly be greatly more cautious to even contemplate arresting him or a member of his staff for breaching public decency. Also it happened in a small and private museum, which did not have to worry much about external interferences.

The exhibition at Eisei Bunko opened on 19 September 2015 and immediately was overwhelmed by the huge number of visitors. It defied all expectations. According to Hidekazu Miyake, curator at Eisei Bunko, the British Museum *Shunga* exhibition was visited by about 90,000 visitors with about 80 per cent women, whereas Eisei Bunko, halfway through the exhibition period in early November, already exceeded that number with more than 100,000 visitors again with many women attending.¹³ This is most remarkable, as the venue is considerably smaller than the British Museum and not situated in a major centre of Tokyo.

Then on 6 February 2016 the exhibition moved to Hosomi Museum in Kyoto, another small private museum like Eisei Bunko, also renowned for a collection of exquisite traditional works of art. Mr Yoshiyuki Hosomi, the Director of the Museum, told me that he was ready and prepared to host this exhibition, as soon as a Tokyo museum was ready to organise such an exhibition in a collaboration.¹⁴ Here again it was basically a decision of the boss which made the exhibition possible. This one had some additional new exhibits and the queues outside were again very long.

There was a third very small exhibition at the commercial gallery, Nagai Garô in Tokyo, which opened on 20 September 2015. This contained some original *shunga* works, but the best feature of this exhibition was the display of a whole sequence of a *shunga* picture book with blown up reproductions with all the text transcribed page by page. An entire floor was more or less dedicated to this one book. We could follow exactly what was happening with this complicated love story or rather stories. Dr Aki Ishigami devised this display and was also one of the organisers in all four exhibitions discussed here including the one at the British Museum.

More recent research on *shunga*, spearheaded by the International Research Center for Japanese studies in Kyoto, British Museum and SOAS in London emphasised the more fun side of *shunga*, which was often called *warai-e* (pictures for laughs) and where women often are also having fun and don't behave just as sex objects for men as in most Western erotic art and pornography. This became understandable for a modern audience by making clear what the text on the pictures actually says, as in the display at the Nagai Garô. A key and new factor is the rehabilitation of *shunga* as art, something one should take seriously and also something could offer one genuine

aesthetic enjoyment. The mainstream history of *ukiyo-e*, the Edo period popular art, has avoided dealing with *shunga* seriously for a long time.¹⁵ This glass ceiling has been broken and backed by the sheer number of visitors, especially by women, and by the fact that the police did not interfere. I am sure the persistence of the skirmishes between the artists and the police will continue, as could be seen in the cases of Rokudenashiko and Ryûdai Takano, but these series of *shunga* exhibitions have shown that public taste regarding nude art and expression of sexuality could and would change over time.

Notes

- <en>1 I have published an earlier version of the discussion of the ‘Knickers Incident’ in Watanabe 2010, which contains additional relevant illustrations.
- <en>2 The literature on this subject is quite extensive. The best summary of the issues and detailed documentation can be found in Kinoshita 2015.
- <en>3 See Gerstle 2010. Gerstle comes to an almost identical conclusion with Watanabe 2010. Both attended the same conference, but arrived at these conclusions independently. Inadvertently the two papers together showed a stronger continuity on the issue of censorship of obscene material in Japan from the Edo to the Meiji period. It was not the obscenity itself which was an issue, but the exposure of such material to the public eye (Gerstle 2010, 99; Watanabe 2010, 197).
- <en>4 Teshigawara 1986 gives a detailed account of the circumstances surrounding the creation of this painting.
- <en>5 Smith 1996, 102 gives a good analysis of this issue.
- <en>6 Kitazawa 1994 makes a good point about this issue.
- <en>7 It should be noted that Keiichirô Kume, a close associate of Kuroda’s, insisted that ‘the nude is the basis of art’ (Kume 1984, 25).
- <en>8 Kinoshita 2015, 183 also points out that illustrative material in publications were particularly vulnerable and he traces origin of this to Edo period.
- <en>9 This is also discussed in Nakamura 1981, 78–79.
- 10 Ônishi 1998 is a summary of a paper he gave at the symposium of the Japan Art History Society on 30 May 1998 at Waseda University, Tokyo. The author was present at this symposium and wrote a review of this in *Asahi Shinbun* evening edition, 9 September 1998.

- 11 When this rape scene appeared for the first time in a magazine, the editor prepared the reader for this shocking but crucial event very carefully. On the margins of the immediately previous pages they inserted two readers' comments about this work (*Shûkan Shôjo Komikku*, vol. 21/22, 1976, 281 and 282). The rape scene is on pages 284 and 285. The first reader's comment emphasises that one should not just see the love expressed in this work, but should focus on how the relationships between the two protagonists develops. The second one praises Takemiya for not only tackling such a difficult subject as homosexual love but also how beautifully she depicts it. Thus the editor tried to show that this is not a gratuitous sex scene. I am grateful to Kyoto International Manga Museum for their help in this research.
- 12 Kinoshita 2015 provides detailed documentation. Also see Takano's gallery website: www.ycassociates.co.jp/jp/information/aichi-takano. I have relied for my documentation on these two sources. I am also grateful to Dr. Taisuke Edamura for providing me information relating to Takano's work.
- 13 Hidekazu Miyake's introduction to the *Shunga* symposium organised by the Japan Art History Society on 9 November 2015 at Waseda University, Tokyo.
- 14 Mr Hosomi and Ms Kyôko Itô, Chief Curator of the Museum, kindly guided me through the exhibition on 13 March 2016 and I had an opportunity to talk to Mr Hosomi afterwards. I should like to thank Professor Tadashi Kobayashi for kindly arranging my visit.
- 15 Kinoshiita 2015 discusses this, pointing out Gaikotsu Miyatake as an early notable exception who valued *shunga* seriously.

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