

FINAL DRAFT

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‘REAL’ NATURE, ‘AESTHETIC’ NATURE AND THE MAKING OF ARTWORKS:

SOME CHALLENGES OF CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION

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INTRODUCTION

It is not unusual to find artists collaborating across cultures, but the different histories and traditions of the participating cultures inevitably create barriers to genuine artistic cooperation. Moreover, the understandable impulse to celebrate (for educational, social and academic reasons) those cross-cultural encounters means that the hidden barriers are often under-explored and under-theorized. This paper grew out of one such exchange between British and Japanese artists, philosophers and theorists that took place in 2010-12 which was centrally concerned with the interplay between art and nature – or, at least, between art and natural sounds and materials.¹ However, what follows is not meant in any simple way to be a report of those activities. Rather, drawing on the rich experiences of that collaboration, this paper will attempt to analyse the barriers that seem to impede full cross-cultural artistic encounters, and it will explore their wider implications in an apparently “globalized” world. To do this, four types of encounter will be investigated in detail – the interface between one culture and another; the relationship between concepts of Nature and the cultural traditions of which they form part; the supposed ‘fusion’ between art and Nature; and the interplay between theory and practice.

¹ The project was called “Shizengaku” (after the Japanese title of Aristotle’s *Physics*). It involved (from Seian University) the artist Shuji Okada, the art-theorist Mariko Kaname, and the philosopher Kazuto Yamamoto; and (from Goldsmiths’ College, University of London), the sound artist John Drever, the historian and theorist Naomi Matsumoto, and myself as an aesthetician. The project was generously supported by the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, and the International Research Fund of Seian University.

ENCOUNTER 1: CULTURE MEETS CULTURE

It is striking that even high-profile international projects tend to emphasize the social and educational consequences of cultural exchange rather than aesthetic meanings of the works and activities. This seems to be the case, for example, in activities sponsored by UNESCO – art is used to inform the participants of the richness of cultures outside of their immediate experience, to foster respect for those other cultures, and to encourage the education and development of people by inviting them to participate in cultural and artistic activities. On the other hand, we learn very little about how the artistic artefacts produced and shared might be valued and judged in their own terms.²

This relative silence seems to arise from the not unusual (and hopeful) belief that artworks that lead to beneficial experiences must also be valuable in their own right. There is also the genuine difficulty of judging the activity of art in multi-cultural situations, and nervousness about seeming to impose values on a society from the outside.³ After all, artworks (unlike cars or hamburgers) are not ‘consumer primitive’, which means that their ‘design features’ do not exactly reflect limited, clearly defined and universally understood needs. In the case of a ‘globally-shared’ artwork, the ‘message’ that is received in the presence of that artwork, and the uses to which it is put, by its ultimate consumers are very unlikely to match exactly the message or function that was intended by its makers.⁴ Cross-cultural artistic exchanges may operate within the broad framework of economic and political openness, but the industrial-global market model, based on the monetary ‘exchange value’ of goods and services, cannot account for the subtle adaptations of cultural use and enrichment. Even Karl Marx was forced to observe: ‘Use-value as such, since it is independent of the determinate economic form, lies outside the sphere of investigation of political economy’.⁵ Thus, if we are going to gain insight into the ‘conditions of interface’ between artistic cultures, we need to establish a

² See the various claims on the UNESCO website at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/introducing-unesco/>.

³ These issues are especially familiar to anthropologists and ethnographers who use (among other methods) ‘participant observation’ to negotiate the problems. See: James Spradley, *Participant Observation* (London: Wadsworth, 1980); and Kathleen DeWalt and Billie DeWalt, *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers* (Lanham: Altamira, 2011). This theoretical and practical approach can make fieldworkers aware of the issues, and help them to deal more sensitively with them, but it tends not to analyze the nature of ‘cultural rift’ at a deeper level, which is a major concern of this article.

⁴ For an account of how global distribution can affect the reception of a specific artwork see: Anthony Pryer, ‘Vivaldi's Four Seasons and the Globalization of Musical Taste’, *Musicology and Globalization: Proceedings of the International Congress in Shizuoka 2002* (Tokyo: Academia Musica Ltd, 2004), 180-183. A longer version of this paper is available free at: <http://eprints.gold.ac.uk/110/>, the GRO (Goldsmiths Research Online) portal at the website of Goldsmiths' College, University of London.

⁵ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* [1859], trans. Nahum Stone (New York: International Publishers, 1904; reprint, 1970), 28.

different model for discussing those contacts. For the purposes of this article we will characterize those modes of collaborative engagement under four different types of operation: combinatorial; hierarchic; hermeneutic; and thematic.

In *combinatorial* encounters works from two or more cultures might simply be juxtaposed together in the same exhibition, or artists from the societies involved might go to each other to exchange new techniques and viewpoints. But these activities on their own do not help us to explore – let alone create – a fusion of aesthetic worlds, and while such combinatorial displays may turn out to be suggestive they do not necessarily contain or initiate new ideas by that fact alone. Also, exchanges between artistic cultures do not guarantee an equal cultural sharing or integration. For example, when contacts between Japan and the West opened up after 1858, artists such as Manet, Degas and Monet, followed by Van Gogh, began to collect Japanese prints and imitate their designs and their approaches to perspective.⁶ Within a very short time we begin to see echoes of Japanese approaches to patterning, perspective, bold coloristic effects, and draughtsmanship in the West.

We should note, however, that these examples signalled a type of borrowing from Japanese culture that was unequal, partial and parasitic – in other words they were *hierarchic* encounters. Hierarchic encounters happen when artists from one culture selectively borrow from another for the primary purpose of enriching their own traditions. The Western artists immediately affected by the opening up of Japan knew some instances of Japanese art, but none had been to Japan, and what they were interested in was how to enhance the rather sterile academic Western traditions that stood in the way of their own processes of art-making. Japanese techniques were being plundered to serve Western art and help it out of a crisis of style and purpose.

Of course, most nations at some point in their history use elements from other cultures to enrich their own, and Japan has itself gone through several episodes of ‘hierarchic borrowing’ from China and Korea, especially during the Asuka (552-645) and Nara (710-794) periods. It also had influential contact with art from the West in the Edo period (1603-1867), when, for example, the interest in *Rangaku* (‘Dutch Learning’) in the eighteenth century drew intellectuals such as Hoshu Katsuragawa and Gentaku Otsuki to Nagasaki to explore new techniques of many kinds. Soon we also find a painter like Naotake Odano not only employing the techniques of Western perspective, but adding reflections of ships and

⁶ For surveys of these contacts see, for example: Siegfried Wichmann, *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art since 1858*, translated by Mary Whittall (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999); Hiroko Johnson, *Western Influence on Japanese Art* (The Hague: Hotei Publishing, 2004); and Lionel Lambourne, *Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West* (London: Phaidon, 2007).

buildings in water, and allowing depicted human beings and objects to cast shadows on the ground (features otherwise extremely rare in Japanese art). Moreover, Kokan Shiba (1747-1818) – the teacher of Hokusai – along with some other Japanese artists, sometimes described himself as ‘a western-style painter’.⁷ The cultural ‘isolation’ of Japan was not as complete as we might suppose.

The ‘ideal’ goal of cultural exchange, however, has never been simply to juxtapose two different practices, or to set up a situation where one society might borrow from another. Rather it has been to bring about a fusion of styles and interpretative approaches in what we should characterize as a genuine *hermeneutic* merger – a new synthesis of approaches to the interpretation and meaning of art. This is a highly problematic endeavour, and some of its difficulties can be seen through the activities of an artist such as Paul Gauguin (1848-1903).

Gauguin worked in Tahiti from the 1891 onwards and may be taken as an instance of someone who at least had a genuinely deep engagement with the indigenous stylistic practices of the South Sea Islanders – an engagement which, some have argued, led to the establishment of ‘Primitivism’ in Western art.⁸ Of course, the term ‘Primitivism’ is itself an alarmingly hierarchic term for a movement that claimed to be a merger of cultural practices, but there are further concerns about whether such a ‘merger’ could ever be really possible. After all, Gauguin’s particular use of symbolic meanings, the enclosed framed spaces of his works, the individualism of his personal style, the importance for him of the history and progress of art, and his view of the Pacific islands as a kind of other-worldly decadent paradise, irredeemably mark him out as an artist of distinctly Western orientation.

We shall return to the intractable problems of hermeneutic fusion in the final section of this article. There is, however, a fourth approach to artistic exchange that is more common and is usually taken to be more fruitful, and that is what we might call the *thematic* approach. In the face of barriers to genuine cultural fusion artists are encouraged to look instead at their contrasting national responses to similar aspects of the world or to types of artistic technique and theory. Thus artists from different cultures might reflect on subjects such as love, the

⁷ See: http://www.ndl.go.jp/nichiran/e/s2/s2_4_1_2.html (this is a website dedicated to ‘Japan-Netherlands Exchange in the Edo Period’). Also: Grant Kohn Goodman, *Japan and the Dutch, 1600-1853* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Matthi Forrer, ‘Western Influences on Hokusai’s Art, in *Hokusai*, ed. Gian Carlo Calza (London: Phaidon, 2003), 23-31.

⁸ See Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* [1927] (New York: Dover, 1955); Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966/R1986); Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society* (London: Routledge, 1988); and Susan Hiller, editor, *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London: Routledge, 1991).

rendering of perspective, war, self-portraiture, feminism, childhood, and so on.⁹ This thematic approach has the advantage that there seems at least to be a sharing of focus, and even if such a ‘coming together’ fails, the encounters can highlight differences in interesting ways. In that sense the approach is not just a juxtaposition of contrasting viewpoints, but a deliberate method of discovery, an *heuristic strategy*. For that reason the Japanese-British project that initiated this article took as a central theme works by artists interested in utilising materials from Nature, and we shall turn to that subject shortly.

There remains one further barrier to cross-cultural exchange that needs to be considered here. That is the notion that cross-cultural encounters are possible in the artistic arena because distinct, clearly differentiated and historically stable cultures exist. But this assumption is complicated by the fact that, in the modern globalized world, no culture is completely pure and isolated from developments in other societies, and some ‘exchanges’ have usually taken place long before a particular, directed project is initiated.¹⁰ From historical perspectives such as these, all nations are mongrel nations in cultural terms, and the ‘unity’ they accord themselves tends to be a motivating concept rather than an absolute fact.¹¹

These historical exchanges leave their traces on the surface similarities of certain genres, subjects and techniques favoured by artists across cultures. What we need to do to compensate for these superficial similarities is to explore what we might call the ‘tradition-archaeology’ of each culture – an approach that looks at not just at what different artistic cultures do and think now, but at the deep-rooted, and sometimes unconscious, historical and social motivations behind those concepts and activities. This approach is needed because, in the end it is not *what* artists do that marks out the distinctions between cultures, but *why* they do it.¹² To put it another way, the differences arise not so much through what they ‘say’ through their art, but through what they say by saying it – and that is partly governed by their culture. Artists from other cultures do not speak directly to us, they speak to us through a

⁹ The combinatorial and thematic approaches form the basis of what is sometimes referred to as ‘comparative aesthetics’, though the results can be variable in terms of sophistication. For a subtle treatment of some themes (gender, selfhood, place and landscape, *etc.*) see: Steven M. Leuthold, *Cross-Cultural Issues in Art: Frames for Understanding* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁰ For interesting discussions of the Japanese assimilation and transformation of Western aesthetic notions see: Michele Marra (ed.), *Modern Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

¹¹ See for example the discussions of Japan in: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); and John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford Readers Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Also Jean-Pierre Lehmann, ‘The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan’ in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith, Oxford Readers Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 116-120.

¹² The failure to make this distinction clear explains, for example, a certain limitation to the attempts in the 1970s and 80s to train ethnomusicologists through a process of acquiring ‘bi-musicality’ – that is, proficiency in two musical systems, or on non-Western as well as Western musical instruments. See: Mantle Hood, *The Ethnomusicologist* (New York: McGraw, 1971).

dialogue they cannot avoid having with their own traditions, and their works are commentaries upon those traditions. It is the purpose of this paper to open up some of the tensions between surface similarity and the deeper fractures of artistic exchange, and since the project that initiated this study was concerned with Nature and Art, we shall begin with the problematic cultural concept of 'Nature'.

ENCOUNTER 2: NATURE MEETS CULTURE

It is tempting to see in the Eastern and Western concepts of Nature a preoccupation that seems to be shared. However, that vague impression alone will not help us to uncover the distinctive tendencies of each culture, nor their crucially different underlying meanings. To do those things we need to be aware of the various notions of Nature that emerge from both societies through their histories, and their philosophical and religious discourses. We can then see how those cultures have adapted and used those types in relation to aesthetics and art. **Appendix 1** contains a proposed taxonomy of six common ways in which the idea of 'Nature' has been construed. Broadly speaking those notions characterize Nature as either an ontological entity, or as a class of objects and events, or a domain, or force, or system, or an Ideal. Of course, each of those categories in Japan and the West has attracted its own kind of manifestation, its own complicated history, and those histories form part of the explanation of the differing significances of Nature and art in the two cultures discussed here.

As for art in the two societies **Appendix 2** contains a summary of the distinctive traditional artistic attitudes and practices operating in Japan and the West. These differences are outlined in relation to four headings: 'The Realm of Art'; 'Aesthetic Properties'; 'The Purpose and Value of Art'; and 'Style and Subject Matter'.¹³ This schematic outline is inevitably simplistic but it is intended as a context from which to begin discussions, not as a verdict or conclusion at the end of them. As we shall see, fractures between the two cultures tend particularly to occur in relation to: 1) whether human beings are objective observers of Nature or embedded within it; 2) whether there is a continuum between art and Nature, or a

¹³ For a brief historical survey of some of these aspects see: John Tucker, 'Japanese views of Nature and the Environment', in *Nature Across Cultures*, ed. Helaine Selin and Arne Kalland (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 161-183. The literature on Japanese aesthetics and art is vast. For much of what follows see: Nancy Hume (ed.), *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture: A Reader* (New York: 1995); Toshihiko Izutsu and Toyo Izutsu, *The Theory of Beauty in the Classical Aesthetics of Japan* (The Hague and Boston: 1981); Yuriko Saito, 'The Japanese Appreciation of Nature', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 25/3 (1985), 239-51; and Joan Stanley-Baker, *Japanese Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984/revised 2000). My thanks to Professor Eske Tsugami, Dr Mariko Kaname and Dr Naomi Matsumoto for discussing some of the details of these two Tables with me. Any shortcomings, however, remain solely my responsibility.

separation; 3) whether the artwork is an end in itself, or a means to an end; and 4) whether an artwork should be valued according to the processes involved in its making, or by its content.

The relation of human beings to Nature differs markedly in the two societies. In Japan, the ancient national religion of Shintoism developed first in agricultural communities,¹⁴ and in this setting human beings were seen as embedded into the cycles of the natural world and as non-privileged partners in its unfolding events. This is one reason why Japanese art has a tendency to underplay conspicuous artistic individualism. It also explains why so much Japanese art tends to focus on aspects of nature and why it has made a virtue of its special sensitivity to modest and miniature events in daily life. Japanese art on the whole has preferred to focus upon Nature in a state of decorous serenity and equilibrium, and despite being a land of frequent natural disasters, it seems largely to have avoided depicting the disturbing, awesome, powerful and chaotic forces of Nature – attributes that, in the West, provide material for the depiction of the Sublime in art. This distinction has a profound effect on the different notions of beauty in each society. (See Appendix 2, sections 1 and 4). To the Western way of thinking, it may be beauty that charms us, but it is the Sublime that truly moves us.¹⁵

These distinctive attitudes began early in the two societies. In the West, the established religious traditions emphasize the ‘dominion’ of human beings over the natural world, and this is made clear in the opening chapter of the Jewish and Christian Old Testament (Genesis: Chapter 1, verses 26, 28). A similar hierarchic view can also be found in Islam (*Qur’an*, Suras: 2:30; 14:32-34; 31:20). Furthermore the ancient Greek myths of the creation of the world tell a story of the emergence of order (Greek: ‘cosmos’) from disorder (Greek: ‘chaos’). The Greek term ‘cosmos’ therefore suggests that Nature represents a ‘regulated state of affairs’, and is significantly different from the Latin-derived term ‘universe’ which simply indicates an all-inclusive domain.¹⁶ (Compare Types 3 and 5 in Appendix 1). Again, the very words ‘Nature’ and ‘Art’ in modern English derive from the Latin terms *naturalis* and *artificialis* which are in clear opposition to each other – the former meaning ‘occurring in or by nature’ (and therefore authentic and true), and the latter ‘constructed or occurring by a

¹⁴ On Japanese religions in general see the standard study by William Bunce (ed.), *Religions in Japan: Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity*, 3rd edn (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: Tuttle Publications, 1959); and also Joseph Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* [1764]. trans. John Goldthwaite (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), II, 209.

¹⁶ The Latin term ‘*rerum universitas*’ can be found in this sense in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Book I, section 39.

manipulative act or intervention’ (and therefore implying something false or contrived).¹⁷ It took well over a thousand years in the West for that implied opposition between art and Nature to begin to change.

One reason for that opposition was that early Western theories saw Nature as a physical and scientific realm, whereas art was concerned with the imagination and with ethical and aesthetic ideas. It is in the writings of Aristotle that we find a move towards truly scientific notions of Nature. In his *Physics* he defined ‘Nature’ as including only those things that have the ability to grow and change without external intervention or cause – and that largely meant for him organic plants and animals.¹⁸ Thus, in contrast to some modern notions, human beings were embedded in Aristotle’s system of Nature. On the other hand he rejected other things we would now happily consider to be ‘natural’ (such as the formation of rainbows) because they happen by a chance coming together of conditions in the locality rather than by internal necessity. Thus in focusing upon a particular set of ‘regularities’, Aristotle automatically restricted ‘Nature’ to the set of things, the class of objects, to which those regularities could be applied (see Appendix 1, Type 2). Aristotle also insisted that the cosmos was not a place as such, but an organised, interdependent system,¹⁹ and this tendency of a particular kind of organizing principle to focus on a class of objects or events rather than a comprehensive realm can also be seen in the case of Nature viewed scientifically as a domain defined only by the laws of physics (Appendix 1, Type 3). Where is our sense of beauty, or imagination, or art in such a scheme?

Not all of the influential ideas about Nature in the West derived from strictly systematic scientific descriptions, especially when it came to explaining the driving forces or purposes of Nature. Heraclitus, for example, argued that the cosmos comprised a cycle of transformations of matter (all driven by the energetic force of fire) and this produced a world where opposites were held together in unity by a force that is more fundamental than the surface manifestations of difference.²⁰ It is this ceaseless change of surface identity and experience, this constant state of ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’, of apparent repetition but actual difference, that determines why, for example, we cannot ‘step into the same stream twice’ – a famous observation that is frequently associated with Zen Buddhism but in fact is first

¹⁷ The two terms are used in opposition, for example, in works by Cicero (*De Natura Deorum*, Book II, line 87 [c. 50 BC]) and Quintilian (*De Institutio Oratoria*, Book V, Section 1.1 [c. 50AD]).

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), Book II, 1. 192b, 8-15.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Physics*, Book IV, 5.212b, 12-16.

²⁰ The existence of a book on Nature by Heraclitus is mentioned in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R. D. Hicks (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1925), IX.6. Only fragments survive of writings by Heraclitus and they are collected together with extensive commentaries in: Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

recorded by Heraclitus in the sixth century BC.²¹ Nature as a process, and existence as ‘becoming’ rather than ‘being’, have influenced the ideas of many, including most notably those of the modern French philosopher Gilles Deleuze²² (see Appendix 1, Type 4), and we shall turn in more detail to those ideas in the final section of this article.

Buddhism arrived in Japan in the sixth century AD, and it rapidly influenced attitudes to art and Nature. (See Appendix 2, Column A, sections 2 and 3). Firstly, it emphasized the notion of a journey towards enlightenment in which all activities in life, including art, should play a part. In artistic terms this does tend to have the effect of valuing the making of art for its consequences, its assistance on that journey, rather than for the inherent features of the items produced. Secondly, Buddhism preached the acceptance of pain, suffering and imperfection, a perspective that gives some Japanese works an air of gentle melancholy, and a tendency to deny the all-conquering ego of the artist. In this mode of thinking the artist submits to his or her art, rather than dominates it. Thirdly Buddhism taught an acceptance of the transience of life, and for the artist that means that those fleeting moments of our experience have to be captured deftly and confidently before they fade away. Such ideas did not only influence art in the Far East. The growth of interest in Eastern Philosophies in the West since the 1960s has meant that in much contemporary Western art – especially performance art, conceptual art, and some kinds of sound art and electro-acoustic music - the processes by which ‘works’ are created are beginning to play an equal, and sometimes superior, role to the mere ingredients of the final product as markers of the value of the artistic enterprise. How works are arrived at has become at least as important as what they are.

In the West, it was not until the European Enlightenment that science and art tentatively began to come together. We can see the beginnings of this process, for example, in Alexander Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* (1711) where Nature is clearly described as a rational realm (lines 88-9), but is also held up as a guide and model for Art (lines 68-73) since it provides the ideal of ‘Life, force and beauty’ to which artists should aspire (compare Table 1, Type 6).

²¹-See Heraclitus, Fragment 91 in Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 168-9. The statement is also quoted and attributed to Heraclitus in Plato’s *Cratylus*, section 402a. The question of possible influences between the ideas of Heraclitus and those found in ancient India and Iran (and Buddhism) is discussed in Martin West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). Buddhism began in India in the sixth century BC. A critical discussion of Martin West’s views can be found in Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*, 297-302.

²² See, for example, Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* [1968], trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum Press, 1994). Deleuze seems to have known the writings of Heraclitus largely through Nietzsche’s discussion of them. See: Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* [1962], trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum Press, 2006), 22-3. Deleuze was also strongly influenced by the more developed form of some of these notions found in Spinoza. See Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* [1968], trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1999).

However, these qualities of Nature could never be released into art through a simple act of imitation and copying. Rather, as the painter Joshua Reynolds made clear in his *Discourses on Art* (1770), it was the artist's job to make manifest through the work of the imagination (rather than scientific enquiry) the beauty and perfection to which Nature aspired, since those qualities could not be lifted in a raw state from the world of appearances.²³ In the early Romantic period (1780-1830) criticism of science reached its peak, and Nature-philosophers such as Friedrich Schelling saw Nature as infused with poetry, almost an art form in its own right (with God as the artist), from which they must extract symbolic meanings by communing with its 'Spirit'. Nature was seen as 'unconscious mind', and the (often disturbing) thoughts of inspired human beings were taken to be the conscious expression of Nature itself.²⁴ This symbiosis brought about an acceptance of the terrible as well as the serene, the disruptive as well as the tranquil, in depictions of Nature. Art no longer just expressed the charm of beauty, but fully embraced the powerful, disturbing forces of the Sublime. Did this mean, then, that Nature had at last revealed itself as a form of Art – and, moreover, as an Ideal form of art?

ENCOUNTER 3: NATURE MEETS ART

The answers to these questions are complicated because although there is no doubt that the materials and events of Nature can be used in art (in that sense there can be Nature *for* art), it does not follow that Nature can be assimilated fully into art (that is, that there can be Nature *as* art).²⁵ The principal defence for the argument that we should consider Nature as a form of art is that since Nature itself has aesthetic properties, it can therefore admit of artistic experiences like anything else with aesthetic properties. This argument, however, is based on a false equivalence between aesthetic objects and art objects. We may, for example, appreciate the beauty of a sunset, but we cannot ask of it many of the questions that would confirm it as having the types of meaning we expect of an art object. A sunset cannot in the

²³ See the extract from *Discourse III* in Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (ed.), *Art in Theory, 1648-1815* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 652-5.

²⁴ See Friedrich Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Errol Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), and Ian Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2008).

²⁵ There are many discussions of the aesthetics of Nature. See, for example: Malcolm Budd, *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002); Donald Crawford, 'Nature and Art: Some Dialectical Relationships', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62 (1983), 49-58; Glenn Parsons, *Aesthetics and Nature* (London: Continuum, 2008); and Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), Chapter 7, 'Formal Natural Beauty'.

ordinary sense be well crafted, or ironic, or a clever allegory, or show creativity and innovation in the manner in which its beauty is displayed. As for any formal beauty it might possess, this is hardly an appreciation of Nature as such since the supposed formal aspects of a sunset could be presumably be appreciated equally well from a photograph as from an outdoor encounter. Moreover, the ‘framing effect’ of photographs is a primary reason why we are persuaded to think of Nature as a collection of artistic scenes at all.

Another aspect of the ‘framing-of-Nature’ problem is that it is not always clear what the function of such a frame should be. In art the frame distinguishes one field of carefully arranged references from another, one work from another, as though to take into account the next painting on the wall would only confuse our experience of the first. But in Nature, if we frame a wooded glade in our mind’s eye to capture a certain kind of aesthetic experience, would that experience really be confused if we then noticed the field of daffodils next to it? The ‘artworks’ imagined from slices of Nature seem infinitely expandable and substitutable in a way that ‘real’ artworks are not. Of course, some artworks are designed to be viewed in series with other artworks – Shuji Okada’s *Waterscape* pictures are a case in point – but they are not designed to be viewed in conjunction with just *any* picture that happens to be next to them. It is also the case that the relation between the general and the particular seems to work differently in Nature as compared with art. We are used to artworks being single and distinct objects, which we admire for their particular qualities and meanings. The individual work of art is in an important sense unique and non-substitutable. The problem is that on some occasions some people seem to express a *general* admiration for nature that seems stronger than, or even independent of, any particular scene or event – as though it would be meaningful to express a general love of art without having any particular work of art in mind, or as though almost any artwork would render the same experience. A general love of ‘beauty’ is not a love of art or Nature as such, let alone an appreciation of the meanings of particular artworks or individual natural scenes.

Part of the problem here is that it is very difficult to know what it would mean to treat nature in its own terms, to treat it ‘for what it is’. What is ‘out there’ in the universe occurring ‘naturally’ is something vastly complex and varied, and we have attempted to come to terms with it by throwing different ‘grids of meaning’ across it that seem, for brief historical and cultural moments, to contain it. But Nature is amoral, it is greatly varied, it changes enormously over time, and (as we saw in the ‘Nature meets Culture’ section above), Nature is always a kind of idea, not a brute, material thing. To treat nature ‘for what it is’ is to treat it under no obvious or enduring concepts at all.

But even if we could treat nature as an object in its own right, how might we then attach a range of values to those experiences? Can there be bad instances of Nature as well as good instances, just as there can be bad as well as good artworks? Must we always value the cockroach as much as the swan? Is nature always kind, or is it sometimes cruel, and if so, in what sense? The assumption of the benign-ness of Nature lies behind many other ways of construing Nature – nature as an eco-system, or as Gaia, or as an environment that provides the context in which we receive aesthetic experiences from art,²⁶ or which simply provides the arena for the aesthetics of everyday life (see Appendix 1, section 5).²⁷ The ‘truth’ about Nature and art depends not upon Nature ‘itself’ (if there is such a thing) but upon our theories about what it is. And the kind of truth we ‘discover’ depends in large part upon the methods and theories we use to discover it.

ENCOUNTER 4: THEORY MEETS PRACTICE

It should come as no surprise that the relationship between theory and practice is at least as complicated as the other types of encounter we have been discussing in this paper. Theorists are not simply the assistants of artists employed to clarify and publicize their achievements after the fact, so to speak. Sometimes it has been theory itself that has instigated changes in the art-world, as was the case in painting, for example, with the development of Impressionism. The appreciation of natural light and the advantages of working outside of the studio, had been all been discussed and recommended by several theorists of colour in the early 1800s, and especially by Eugène Chevreul in his *The Laws of the Contrast of Colours* of 1839, a book known to many of the artists involved in the new movement. Moreover, new theoretical ideas often play an active part in the construction of new artistic ‘communities-of-belief’, communities whose theory-derived activities in turn lead to new stylistic and cultural perspectives. By such processes theory itself becomes a kind of social practice and it plays its part in changing our experience of the world.

In theory-practice relationships we can observe at least three types of collaboration: theory *of* (existing) practice; theory *for* (forthcoming) practice; and theory *as* a kind of practice. These are, we might say, the ‘enabling agendas’ of theory, but we should remember that the way in which theory interfaces with practice in carrying out those agendas is as complicated

²⁶ See for example Eric Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁷ See Arnold Berleant, *Art and Engagement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press); Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); and Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

as any of the other exchanges we have discussed in this article. This is because the perceived authority of a theory fluctuates under the sway of historical and cultural forces just as do the notions of Nature and art. We can perhaps best see some of these forces at work if we compare interpretations of two apparently similar artworks which seem to make a cross-cultural link – Jeff Wall’s photographic light-box installation *A Sudden Gust of Wind, after Hokusai* (1993) and Hokusai’s woodblock *Sunshu Ejiri* (Ejiri in Suruga Province) from the latter’s series of thirty-six views of Mount Fuji (1830-2) (See **Appendix 3**). The similarities between the works are obvious to see, but what do these similarities mean?

Given the conventions of Western and Japanese cultures it seems natural that we should begin with a consideration of genres and traditions. Wall’s photograph resembles in its material features a large plastic advertising sign and, moreover, it is an astonishing one hundred times the size of the Hokusai print. Like many advertisements it is displayed in a light-box, its surface is shiny and buffed, and it refers obliquely, and perhaps ironically, to something culturally more ‘up-market’ – a pre-existent work of art. But there is another influence here as well. Wall’s work seems to portray a staged, decisive moment, and that kind of narrative staging often appears in examples of the Western tradition of tableau painting. This precise genre reference is found in by other works by Wall,²⁸ though what the intended ‘narrative’ here might be it is difficult to say. If it is a narrative about the crossing of cultures then it is a rather thin story unsupported by the inner details of the work or by its stylistic modes of display. On the other hand, given Wall’s previous works, it seems more likely that the allusion to the Hokusai woodblock signals a discourse about the mechanical reproduction of art in its historical setting. Wall’s light-box, based on photography, ought to be easily reproducible, but it is not. Enormous preparation was required to make this work (five months and over two hundred photo sessions in the same location), and in some senses it marks the decline in the 1990s of the centrality of instantaneous, photographic reproduction as a mode of art. In spite of being based on photography Wall’s work is a ‘one-off’ artefact. Hokusai’s print, on the other hand, produced in the 1830s just before the invention of photography, is not a ‘one-off’ production since approximately two hundred copies of a Hokusai picture could

²⁸ For example, his 1992 work, *Dead Troops Talk (A Vision After an Ambush of a Red Army Patrol near Moqor, Afghanistan, Winter 1986)*. Works by Wall based on earlier paintings include: *The Destroyed Room* 1978 (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa) and his *Picture for Women* 1979 (Musée Nationale d’Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris) which respectively refer to *The Death of Sardanapalus* 1827 (Musée du Louvre, Paris) by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), and *A Bar at the Folies-Bergères* 1881-2 (Courtauld Institute, London) by Edouard Manet (1832-83). See: Else Barents, *Jeff Wall: Transparencies* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987).

be reproduced from one set of blocks in a normal print run.²⁹ Within this context the ‘cross-cultural’ work by Jeff Wall seems primarily designed to tell us a story, not about shared ideas, but about two paradigmatic shifts in art history – the change from woodblock reproduction to photography, and from photography to its transformation into ‘one-off’ installations.

Beyond that, each of the works captures a radically different idea of Nature. Wall’s natural environment is that of the bleak, god-less, industrialised, agricultural landscape near Vancouver in Canada. Even his figures seemed to have brought the city with them; two of them wear suits, and the others appear to be dressed in the ‘recreational’ clothes of urban visitors rather than those of agricultural workers as such. Hokusai’s environment on the other hand is pre-industrial, his horizon is filled with Mount Fuji (a majestic natural object, and a spiritual symbol), and there is no discernible distinction of status between the figures. The central area of the picture beside the road contains a clearly identifiable religious artefact – a Shinto shrine or *hokora* to the local gods. It has also been suggested that Hokusai encoded within the picture another religious reference, a sign of his allegiance to a Buddhist sect devoted to Myoken Bosatsu – considered to be a personification of the Pole Star in the constellation of the ‘Little Dipper’, otherwise known as the Little Bear (or Ursa Minor).³⁰ The black lines added to his picture in Appendix 3 show how the seven human figures correspond to seven of the stars in that constellation, with the Pole Star itself, the brightest star, represented by the unrealistically large wind-borne hat at the upper right-hand side. Given these strong indications of a spiritual intention, it seems likely that Hokusai attempted in this scene to convey, not the wind itself (the wind is not mentioned in his title), but the effect of something ‘invisible’ on the visible. Indeed, the picture seems to capture one of those supernatural moments from mythology where odd and unsettling disturbances accompany the sudden visitation of a god. And then there are the papers spiralling away from the woman. Do they rush away as a result of a simple accident of the weather, creating chaos as, tucked into her kimono (and apparently wrapped under layers of clothes), they somehow escape into the

²⁹ Some ‘original’ printed copies of Hokusai’s *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji* went down with the Italian cruise ship *Costa Concordia* when it ran aground in January 2012, but we do not think of those works as ‘lost’. Original prints of the Hokusai picture survive in: the Edo Tokyo Museum; the British Museum, London; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Library of Congress, Washington; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Honolulu Academy of Arts; and many other locations besides. For a famous account of the status of mechanical reproductions in art see: Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in his *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt and trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973), 211-24.

³⁰ Ewa Machotka, *Visual Genesis of Japanese National Identity: Hokusai’s Hyakunin Isshu* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2009), 212-13. In fact the ‘big dipper’ shape suggested by the picture does not quite correspond to the constellation. In the latter, the ‘handle’ bends upwards from the top of the pan not downwards as in the picture. This discrepancy cannot be explained by any theory of mirror images, nor by very small changes in the position of the stars in the last 180 years, though it may represent artistic license on the part of Hokusai.

wind? Or do they metaphorically represent the recorded deeds of her past life flying towards Mount Fuji as her soul is released? Curiously, her face at that very moment is suddenly shrouded with a cloth, as if in death.³¹ Each of Hokusai's figures is, in any case, clearly engaged upon a journey (whether spiritual or geographical or both), whereas Wall's 'off-road' characters are curiously static in spite of their gestures, which, in the absence of a clear narrative, seem artificial and bizarre. The deeper we delve into the two pictures the more superficial the resemblances between them become.³²

Attempts at a formal analysis of the pictures also fail to bring them closer together. This is because Hokusai's dramatic effects are produced in ways more typical of Japan than the West – a surprising fact considering much has been made of his awareness of the perspective practices of Western art. He employs here, as in some other works by Japanese artists, two types of perspective simultaneously. (See the red lines in Appendix 3). On the left of the trees, looking towards Mount Fuji, there is a frontal (standard, Western) perspective that diminishes the second, unimportant figure in the background in the right proportions, as the eye is led to the distant mountain. But a second, oblique plane of perspective (more typical of Japanese practices) moves up from the bottom of the trees to the right at an angle of 20 degrees. This keeps the human figures most affected by the turmoil exactly the same size even though they are apparently on a winding road moving away from us, and it also ensures that the blown-away papers and the escaped hat remain large too since, in pictorial terms, they are situated at the 'front' of the oblique perspectival plane, despite moving rapidly downwind of the viewer. These devices subtly exaggerate and heighten the presence of the important figures and the objects within the work in ways that a 'realistic' Western photographic perspective cannot.

These interpretations uncover fractures between the two artistic practices that, it seems, no amount of 'homage' paid by one artist to another can repair. In any case, the 'homage' paid by Jeff Wall to Hokusai seems to be expressed more through the process he went through to create a transparency that resembled to some extent the Japanese print, than through any kind

³¹ The Japanese terms for the cloth that covers the face at death are *kaokake* or (in the Buddhist tradition) *menpu*.

³² Other interpretations are possible, of course. The art critic Andrew Graham-Dixon, for example finds the print amusing, with each of the human figures 'contributing a different touch of humour' to the 'mundane' scene. He also suggests that the flying tissues may be a reference to the story of Taiga Ikeno, an eighteenth-century artist, who used up 600 sheets of paper trying to capture the outline of Mount Fuji. See: <http://www.andrewgrahamdixon.com/archive/readArticle/186>. Such a reading of the work would require a demonstration that the apparent religious references are an illusion or not of primary significance, that Hokusai had reasons for representing the male artist Ikeno by a woman, and that the contemporary Japanese audience would have found the figures and their struggle against the elements amusing in the same way that a certain kind of modern Westerner might. Alternatively feminist theorists might make much of the fact that the woman's face is concealed in both pictures, and that in Wall's portrayal (in which she wears a trouser suit) her gender is made ambiguous.

of exact fidelity to the details of that picture. Enormous preparation was required to make Wall's work - it took 5 months and over two hundred photographic sessions in the same location, waiting for the same weather conditions - and it seems that we are being asked to see that commitment and technique as the proper symbols of cross-cultural respect, rather than any sharing of meaning or exact content. Once again it seems to be the process of sharing, rather than the end product, which offers the clue as to how we should value 'cross-cultural' works. As for our interpretations of the two pictures explored above, we should not be surprised to have discovered major differences between them. After all, the kinds of questions we have been asking of the pictures are focused exactly on cultural references, traditional genres and subjective intentions, so they are bound to produce 'answers' that fracture (rather than construct) bonds between societies, because those sorts of question are already deeply implicated in cultural difference. In the circumstances of cross-cultural collaboration, then, the challenge for the relationship between theory and practice is: how might we find interpretations that would transcend cultural differences?

One way would be to find explanations of meaning that move to a level of abstraction that seems to transcend the intentions and expressions of individuals and particular social situations. Suppose, for example, that the two art objects by Wall and Hokusai explore a particular idea or type, and that that aesthetic idea is not fully contained in or expressed by either of them. Therefore, in the ongoing journey of the expanding generation of that idea (its 'Becoming', we might say), the Wall work would not only comment upon the Hokusai but the Hokusai would comment upon the Wall. After all, the Hokusai work is itself already part of a series of other prints that evoke a 'force-field' of implications (the cumulative and unending meanings of Mount Fuji). Moreover, the obvious material 'absence' of any iconic object equivalent to Hokusai's Mount Fuji from the Wall version forces the enormous empty sky of the light-box to resonate with its own incompleteness, its own sense of 'Becoming' - and the power of this 'absence' intensifies the visual experience for the viewer.

It is a short step from thoughts such as these to embracing the complex details of a particular philosophy about the place of art in the world. The task then becomes one of fitting the work to the theory rather than the theory to the work, and we begin to tell ourselves different kinds of story about meaning.³³ 'Artworks', or rather 'art experiences', are lifted out

³³ The history of philosophy is full of examples of philosophers placing the full weight of their theory on a single work of art or artist. Examples include: Heidegger on Van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes* (in *The Origins of the Work of Art*); Foucault on Velasquez's *Las Meninas* (in *The Order of Things*); Nietzsche on Wagner (in *The Case of Wagner*); Adorno on Schoenberg (in *Philosophy of New Music*); Arthur Danto on Andy Warhol (in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*); and Merleau-Ponty on Cezanne (in his *Phenomenology of Perception*).

of the ‘false’ stabilities of culture, identity and subjective expression, and become instead interchangeable exemplifications of the apparent repetitions but unending transformational differences of the universe. Interest in personal intentions or expressions (of which artworks are assumed to be documents) are replaced with a sense of those intensities that accompany our awareness of the passage from one state of ‘Being’ to another, from one meaning to another; and through that eternal procession of change, there would be a gathering sense that there might be an underlying force that drives those changes. The ‘stable substance’ of the artwork, in other words, as well as its cultural and historical meanings, would be dissolved into a continuous but changing signification of the eternal force and flux of the universe itself, of which the chains of artistic explanation and perception are but one manifestation.

Some readers will be aware that this attempt to ‘abstractize’ the experiences of art bears a strong outline resemblance to the ideas of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995). His seems to be a type of theory that promises to rescue us from the constricting identities of culture and subjective expression, and thus open the way for a truly ‘trans-cultural’ explanation of art. We should be cautious, however. First, grand ‘theories of everything’ in relation to art and the world might seem to aspire to the status of scientific models, but scientific theories (such as the laws of gravity) are designed to predict results or events under certain conditions, whereas ‘theories’ of art have very little predictive power – can we confidently announce what the meaning of an artwork produced in fifty years’ time must consist in? Second, scientific theories tend to be cast in a manner that allows us not only to confirm that they might fit some situations, but also to see very clearly when they do not – that is, they are not only ‘verifiable’ but also (and very importantly) ‘falsifiable’, because they can be clearly tested. But if someone tells us that artworks are symbolic manifestations of the motivating but unknowable force of the universe, how could we ever falsify that claim – how could we ever test it?³⁴

At the level of abstract generalities, it is difficult to tell the difference between a ‘theory’ of art and a meticulously asserted fantasy about it. Moreover, most kinds of formal and abstract theory about art run the risk of reducing all artworks to the same meaning and the same value. After all, if artworks, like everything else, ‘essentially’ exemplify the flux of forces in the universe, then that may be interesting to a metaphysician, but it does not help us in its own terms to enrich our distinctive experiences in the presence of particular works. A theory that

³⁴ I have taken the distinction between the verifiable and the falsifiable from Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959; reprint, 1980). Popper’s arguments are more complex than I can indicate here, and his work has been revised and updated by Curt Ducasse and Willard Quine amongst others.

claims that there is no real distinction between art and other events in the universe is not really a theory of art, or even a theory of why we call certain things by that name.

Moreover, it is unclear what an artist could possibly do with this ‘knowledge’. If the forces that unite Nature, art and the universe are so deep and inevitable then the artist’s works will exemplify those forces anyway, and the generation and creation of new meanings will proceed without any help from the intentions of the artist. Of course, an artist might choose to allegorize the processes involved by producing a series of paintings through time, but the process itself, according to Deleuze, would operate just as well in relation to the decay and changes of meaning associated with a single painting.

There is also a problem for Deleuze, and for the artist, concerning the application of the concept of ‘change’ to events in life. If as Deleuze has it, change is the passage between occasions, then there must be a gap between the formation of one new concept and another that enables us to identify them as separate occasions. So the problem for Deleuze (and for artists) is not so much the demonstration of the ‘continuity of Becoming’ in relation to artworks and life, but rather the demonstration of the ‘Becoming of continuity’ – that is, how a seamless connection might arise between the individual separate meanings that occur in different circumstances as we (and the artwork) go on our procession through time.

In practice, of course, the ways in which artists relate to ideas hardly ever fit the theory-model of a search for comprehensive clarification at all. Rather art practice retains its autonomy by resisting and sidestepping the tendency of theory to ‘explain’, and by simply using it instead as a somewhat haphazardly exploited stimulus for creative ideas. That is why the correctness of ideas arising from some philosophy of art is less important for artists than exciting changes in the ‘history of ideas’ whether those ideas are right or wrong. The somewhat arbitrary ‘paradigm shifts’ in the culture of ideas (romanticism, Freudianism, formalism, modernism, structuralism, feminism, deconstruction, etc.) have a much greater effect on artistic styles and practices than any proof that those ideas might be right, or any refutation that indicates that they are mistaken.³⁵ Those temporary paradigms provide ready-made ‘discourse arenas’ in which art theories and art works can place themselves immediately

³⁵ The current interest in the theories of Deleuze in Japan has its social and historical reasons as well as reasons associated with their explanatory power. Those theories began to take root as early as 1979 when Hidenobu Suzuki and Kuniichi Uno sat in his lectures in Paris, followed by many visits to Japan by Deleuze’s collaborator Félix Guattari in the 1980s. For an interesting discussion of these connections see: ‘Japan: The Chosen Land’ in François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 481-83. The recent move in Western theories away from abstract and formalist approaches, and towards cultural, anthropological and economic explanations of art, has been linked by some with the fall of Communism, and the removal of the need in the West to oppose (as a matter of principle) Marxist-related theories of art as a social product. See, for example, Sanna Pederson, ‘Defining the Term “Absolute Music” Historically’, *Music and Letters* XC, no. 2 (2009), 240-262.

into a connected dialogue. In that way, what they ‘say’ is usually a commentary on the ready-made intellectual environment, not an attempt to construct an entirely new system – ‘commentary’ art is much more common than ‘revolutionary’ art. Moreover, the art world is one of the few places where ‘progress’ can appear to be made by an act of misunderstanding rather than by understanding. So our task as theorists in relation to art is not to sink comfortably into that ready-made dialogue, nor to seek to unify practices into some kind of grand, artificial vision of transcendent ‘truth’. Rather it is to provide a helpful diagnosis of unresolved issues, a codification of those differences and distinctions in everyday life that have the ability to stimulate artistic imagination and make us alert to the possibilities of experience. In these ways art theory can fulfil its role as a cultural practice. As the famous ethnographer Clifford Geertz observed: ‘This is the first condition for cultural theory: it is not its own master ... its freedom to shape itself in terms of its internal logic is rather limited. What generality it contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions’.³⁶

³⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 24-5.

APPENDIX 1: TYPES OF NATURE

Type	Description	Comments
1. Nature as an original state.	This view is derived from an ontological notion concerned with what the nature of something really is. It attempts to characterize the essential core of something (see also Nature Type 4, below). See Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> , Book 5 (Zeta).	Construes Nature as a primitive, basic state, and is often used to imply the existence of a 'pure nature' before the intervention of human beings.
2. Nature as a class of objects.	Nature as a restricted group of things, sharing significant properties.	See for example Aristotle's <i>Physics</i> , II, 192b: 'natural things are those that by an internal principle grow and change without an external change or cause'.
3. Nature as a domain governed by a consistent set of laws.	This type of nature encompasses what we would normally think of as the physical universe governed by the laws of science.	Since the 'domain' involved is usually taken to refer to the 'universe', the implication is that there can be 'unrestricted nature'.
4. Nature as a force or process.	This version is also derived from ontological notions. It posits a kind of force, or energy, as the 'true reality' or 'moving spirit' behind nature, as in the philosophies Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze, and (in a complex sense) Spinoza.	The power of nature, either physical or spiritual, often provides the subject matter of Western art. It's most obvious influence is on the notion of the Sublime.
5. Nature as an interactive, inter-dependent system	This is the 'Nature' of eco-systems and environmental studies. It provides the context of James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis (1979) where the earth seen as a self-regulating bio-system, with natural mechanisms of repair and balance.	This version derives its meaning and value from an inter-dependent context, and stands behind environmental aesthetics. Also the ethical dimension is strong in this category: Nature is 'good', and the way in which we manipulate and intervene in the planet is seen as 'bad'.
6. Nature as an Ideal	This is not only an abstract concept concerning Nature, but a belief that Nature is a paradigm of innocence, purity, beauty, or some other kind of desirable attribute.	Aesthetic Nature often draws upon the supposed attributes of an 'Ideal' Nature that exemplifies 'beauty'.

APPENDIX 2: JAPANESE AND WESTERN AESTHETICS COMPARED

Aspects of Art	A. Japan	B. The West
1. The Realm of Art	<p><i>'Art' tends to be inclusive?</i></p> <p>1. Decorative arts and crafts, and some types of design, are included. Prominence given to painting, woodcuts, ceramics and decorative arts. Some other types are usually confined to religious art (e.g. sculpture, decorative Buddhist scriptures).</p> <p>2. Also includes actions, ceremonies and events done with artistry (tea ceremony, archery, calligraphy, etc.) or displaying aesthetic/spiritual qualities.</p> <p>3. Following the beliefs of Shintoism (which originated in agricultural ceremonies), there is a central concern with the wholeness of nature and a careful attention to what nature has to offer. The use of natural materials is favoured, but they are enhanced and arranged for display.</p> <p>4. The categories of aesthetics, art and the spiritual are often indistinguishable</p>	<p><i>'Art' tends to be exclusive?</i></p> <p>1. There is a separation of art from the decorative arts and crafts, since the predetermined forms of these latter types are sometimes thought to limit the scope for overt creativity and originality (important Western artistic values). The emphasis is on the produced objects of: painting, music, sculpture, dance, literature, drama, and architecture.</p> <p>2. Only in recent times (through performance art, happenings, etc.) have <i>events</i> as well as 'works' been drawn into the realm of art.</p> <p>3. A concern with nature occurs mainly in relation to certain genres of art; it is not a governing principle.</p> <p>4. There is a growing separation of 'the aesthetic' from 'art-as-such', especially in movements such as conceptual art.</p>
2. Aesthetic properties	<p><i>Aesthetic properties are linked to disciplined awareness in the makers and perceivers of art?</i></p> <p>1. 'Beauty' is perceived directly in the natural material and form of the artwork; it is not necessarily a transcendent quality. It can be approached through a loving attention to the object and a sense of oneness with it. It involves engaging with life through the senses rather than being distracted by 'unnecessary thoughts.'</p> <p>2. Aesthetic qualities are linked strongly to the three Buddhist marks of existence – transience, suffering, and absence of self-nature. This last leads to the illuminating insights of renunciation (<i>teikan</i>).</p> <p>3. The attributes of <i>Wabi-Sabi</i> are central. <i>Wabi</i> implies loneliness in nature, rustic simplicity, understated elegance; <i>Sabi</i> implies the melancholic serenity that comes from impermanence, and the imperfections and changes brought about by ageing and repair. These attributes lead to <i>mono no aware</i>, an empathy for the transience of things and a gentle sadness at their passing. Out of these attitudes death itself has become aestheticized. In the Zen system other features contribute to the achievement of <i>wabi-sabi</i> such as <i>yugen</i> (subtly implied profound depth).</p> <p>4. There is a relative lack of engagement with the brutal or savage strength of nature (the dynamic sublime) in Japanese art.</p>	<p><i>Aesthetic properties centre upon the content and meaning of objects?</i></p> <p>1. 'Beauty' is variously seen as: a) a unique aesthetic property; b) an aesthetic property that arises from other aesthetic properties (elegance, charm, etc.); c) an aesthetic property that arises from non-aesthetic properties (symmetry, integration, closure, etc.); d) a state-of-mind experience arising from judgments involving the free play of imagination, understanding and taste; e) a socially constructed notion with no real existence (Bourdieu, etc.).</p> <p>2. Expression, form, representation and narrative have had central roles in western art – all within a concern for innovation.</p> <p>3. Metaphorical, symbolic and allegorical meanings are commonly considered to be central to the realm of art. 'Correct' or 'acceptable' interpretations are usually sanctioned by a complex relationship between the works, the artists' intentions, the conventions of genres, and the contexts of their creation. The notion of 'correct' interpretations has given way to more 'open' concepts under the influence of hermeneutics, structuralism and deconstruction – the kind of method you use governs the kind of 'truth' you find.</p> <p>4. Extreme feelings and brutal 'truths' (rather than beauty) have a place in the content of much western art. So do the more dramatic forces of nature (involving the dynamic sublime).</p>

<p>3. The purpose and value of Art</p>	<p><i>Art is a ‘way’ to spiritual enlightenment; its values centre upon its <u>consequences</u> and upon the disciplined <u>processes</u> of artmaking?</i></p> <p>1. In keeping with Zen and Buddhist philosophies a central purpose of art is to provide a step on the road to enlightenment (<i>satori</i>). In the system of Japanese arts (<i>Geido</i>) each discipline can provide a ‘pathway’ to this end.</p> <p>2. Japanese art acts as a ‘means’ to an end (not an end in itself), which suggests: a) a strongly consequentialist (rather than inherent) system of value; and b) that any particular artform can (in this respect) be substituted by another.</p> <p>3. The effectiveness of individual works in this system partly relies on a) their unique combination of aesthetic attributes which leads to a sensing of the particular spirit (<i>kami</i>) of that object – a Shinto idea; and b) an appreciation of the specific technical and spiritual discipline that has led to its creation. The Shinto influence is strong only in certain eras.</p> <p>4. Art is valued as a mark of sophistication and enlightenment. Connoisseurship arises from these attributes.</p>	<p><i>Art celebrates individual human endeavor; it is valued for the novel <u>content</u> of artworks and for the way in which they signal progress and provide insight into the human condition?</i></p> <p>1. Art seen as providing stimulation for the imagination, fun for the mind, and (perhaps) nourishment for the soul – a gateway to aesthetic experiences.</p> <p>2. Art usually seen as separate from life – an imaginary or abstract domain where everyday problems might be safely explored or resolved through catharsis. Some theories (Plato, Hegel, Marx, Adorno, etc.) have ethical and historical implications for the responsibility of the artist towards society and the fulfillment of human beings.</p> <p>3. The effectiveness of particular artworks in these ethical roles is often said to result from their ‘truth-content’, and from their convincing, well-formed, instructive insights into the unresolved tensions of society.</p> <p>4. Art is strongly linked to consumerism, and the aggrandizement of institutions and individuals. Connoisseurship often serves these attributes.</p>
<p>4. Style and Subject Matter</p>	<p><i>Style emphasizes the collective and the material?</i></p> <p>1. Art history tends to be divided into style periods identified with ‘factual’ descriptions of changes in political patronage – Ashikaga, Edo, etc. Style is used as a chronological memorandum.</p> <p>2. Style and technique are not always easily separated, particularly in the <i>processes</i> of artmaking. <i>Iki</i> (stylish) describes a manner of execution or display (simple, elegant, spontaneous, direct); it is urban in origin and not applied to nature. Style tends to be defined in terms of general practice (it is a normative, ‘average’ notion). Personal styles are not necessarily linked to a cult of individualism.</p> <p>3. Style and content tend to be more united than in western art. This seems to be because style is used to suggest the spiritual content of art, whereas in the west it is more in the service of individualism.</p> <p>4. The favored subjects (<i>topoi</i>) of art reject human dominance and individualism. They emphasize the miniature or the local and incidental. Aspects of nature (cherry blossom, water, modest events in the lives of small animals) are employed in the service of contemplative insight and the serene. Portraits of individuals tend to be stylized and generic rather than strongly particularized.</p> <p>5. Respect for traditions is valued.</p>	<p><i>Style emphasizes the individual and the metaphysical?</i></p> <p>1. Art history is divided into style periods identified as cultural/metaphysical ideals or prevailing attitudes – Renaissance, Baroque, Romantic, etc. Style is a kind of metaphysic.</p> <p>2. Style implies a cultural meaning as well as a technique. Techniques can be predicted, but style cannot. This is because style implies a creed (a system of belief) as well as a craft. Artistic creeds change more rapidly in the West than in the East, and so craft (technique) tends to get out of phase with creed. Style tends to be defined in terms of the highest achievers (it is an ‘apex’ notion, not an average – what Mozart does <i>is</i> the classical style). It is linked to individualism (and ‘genius’).</p> <p>3. The frequent ‘literalism’ of the subjects of art means that content and style (seen as essence and embellishment) can be easily separated – artists may paint a familiar subject ‘in the style of’ another artist.</p> <p>4. Seascapes, mountain scenes and dark, mysterious forest landscapes have often been used to suggest the ‘negative’, powerful and destructive side of nature and human nature. Portraits aim for the individuality of features and attempt to comment upon, as well as resemble, the person.</p> <p>5. Traditions (which lead to the ‘anxiety of influence’) are often seen as negative.</p>

APPENDIX 3: ARTWORKS BY JEFF WALL AND KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI

3.1. Jeff Wall, *A Sudden Gust of Wind (after Hokusai)*, 1993. Photographic transparency mounted in a light-box. 250 x 397 x 34 cm. [Courtesy of the Tate Modern, London. Catalogue: TO6951]



3.2. Katsushika Hokusai, *Ejiri in Suruga Province (Sunshū Ejiri)*, c.1830-32. Woodblock print. 25.7 x 38cm. [Courtesy of the British Museum. Catalogue number: Asia J A 1907 5-31.0545]

