

# Craft in Britain and Japan: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

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journal or publication title	Traditional Japanese Arts and Crafts in the 21st Century: Reconsidering the Future from an International Perspective
volume	27
page range	29-45
year	2007-09-03
その他のタイトル	日英文化交流のなかの工藝
URL	<a href="http://doi.org/10.15055/00002648">http://doi.org/10.15055/00002648</a>

# Craft in Britain and Japan: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

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Present and future possibilities for craft in Kyoto is quite a challenging and complicated topic. However, as I have been monitoring the presentation of craft works in the UK, I have a number of ideas that might be worthy of further exploration. In my capacity as Director of The Sainsbury Institute for Japanese Arts and Cultures (SISJAC) in Norwich, which has run a number of workshops and exhibitions in Britain that involve various aspects of craft history and its inter-relationship with different historical phenomena over the past seven years, I have begun to comprehend some of the challenges arising regarding perceptions of Japanese craft. Taking an academic cross-cultural perspective on craft, an obvious starting point is to examine the reception of Japan material culture/arts and Japanese studies in the United Kingdom.

The position of Japan and Japanese studies in the UK is at a critical point. Academic positions dedicated to Japan are becoming fewer in number, with a growing emphasis on Chinese studies. All of this is, of course, tied to the perceived economic situation. Happily, recent Japanese economic figures have improved. The perception abroad of Japan's nascent economic recovery was reflected on the 8-14 October 2005 cover of *The Economist* entitled, "The Sun Also Rises." This, of course, affects the position and study of Japanese art and craft internationally, and while economics should not be allowed to bias research, it does need to be factored in to the resulting equation.

As we all know, the first step towards re-evaluation of any process is self-examination, both personally and in the field. Dr. Suzuki Sadahiro has suggested that time be spent here looking at the challenges surrounding the concept of addressing the question of the Japaneseness of Japanese arts and crafts in English. While I

cannot go into this in any depth, I would like to start with a few of my experiences researching and teaching Japanese arts and crafts abroad, then go on to an examination of the current state of the field of craft in the UK from an organizational perspective. Afterward, I give a brief and biased recent history of the reception of Japanese arts and its possibilities in the UK, based on the example of national patronage through the British Museum and individual patronage through the Sainsbury family.

Finally, I turn to the current state of craft in Britain and examine the Crafts Council as an example of national patronage linked with private funding initiatives.<sup>1</sup> The Crafts Council has the specific remit of the promotion of British craft. Here I focus on the prestigious Jerwood Applied Arts annual prize awarded through the Crafts Council, drawing attention to this year's prize (2005), recently awarded for metal craft. I conclude with several ideas gleaned from these topics that might be applicable to the present and future of Kyoto crafts.

### **Personal Experience of Researching and Teaching Japanese Decorative Arts in the United Kingdom**

As an undergraduate at Harvard College I wanted to work with early modern Japanese porcelain, but as I was in an Anthropology/Archaeology department I was instructed that I had to first study Jōmon prehistoric materials, as they represent one of the most important manifestations of Japanese ceramics. I subsequently went on to a Ph.D. course at Harvard University in what was then called the Fine Arts Department (currently it is the History of Art and Architecture Department), and was allowed by my supervisor to write a dissertation on Japanese porcelain, but it is one of the very first ever conducted at the department on what was termed Japanese Decorative Arts. While times have changed at academic institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom, there has been and still continues to be a significant lack of academic focus on craft and decorative arts. Currently, while archaeologists still privilege early periods such as the Jōmon, and academic art historians still privilege painting, prints, and to a lesser extent, sculpture in America and in Europe, this phenomenon thankfully appears to becoming less and less the case.

When I began to teach Japanese art history in England ten years ago at the University of East Anglia (UEA), Norwich, I imagined that Japanese painting would be of

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1 See <http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/>

primary interest to the students. I was surprised and delighted to find that this was not the case. In fact, the receptive nature of the students to anything Japanese, from Jōmon pots to contemporary craft, was refreshing. The courses just needed to be offered, and for the most part they were not. Unfortunately, only SOAS, University of London, currently has an active Japanese art history program, which is worrisome. There is clearly student demand and a need for Japanese art history in the UK.

As an American teaching Japanese art history in the UK, certain challenges were involved, some of which I had not expected. The British conception of where Asia was located was a primary issue. If you mention Asia to a student from the United States, the image of China, Korea, and Japan most likely comes to mind accompanied by some background knowledge. To the undergraduates at the University of East Anglia, inevitably their image was India, and if pushed, Turkey. Japan did not figure prominently in their envisioning of Asia. UEA students' knowledge of Japan and its history was perhaps as a result minimal.

The UEA students' image of Japan rested upon popular cultural products of the last ten years, such as then *tamagochi* to Pokemon and now *The Last Samurai*, manga, *anime*, and the J-League (World Cup) soccer. Interestingly, Bernard Leach (1887-1979) was virtually unknown to the students, although other St. Ives-based artists such as Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975) were known. Trying to define Japan and Japanese cultural production to students with no knowledge of Japanese history was challenging at best. Furthermore, the general emphasis on a growing Europe, which incorporates many different cultures has focused attention on the regional as opposed to the national, the so-called "glo-cal" phenomenon. It became apparent that teaching Japanese art in isolation was not the most effective way to reach the university students. What appealed to the students was directed focus on particular aspects of Japanese culture or media, often in conjunction with regional comparisons (for example, craft in early twentieth-century Japan and India).

I was surprised by the students' eagerness to learn about Japan in context, and many of the students took all of the Japanese-focused classes that were offered. Indeed, arts and crafts of non-Western cultures were more popular at the University of East Anglia than those of standard Western derivation (for example, Renaissance arts). I believe what helped the popularity of the Japanese courses was the presence of Japanese students in the class. This made the interactions come alive for the English

students. Another essential aspect was the interface with actual objects in museums and collections, and interaction with artists, such as UK based potters, themselves.

In sum, there is significant interest in Japanese arts and crafts in Britain, not only on a grass roots level, but also in a higher education when opportunities are provided. There is little foundation, but genuine interest, which must be nurtured through direct experience, interaction, integration with other subject matter, and thoughtful approaches. Importantly, Japanese crafts need to be put into a context that is comparative in nature and not self-reflexive in order for their study to attract more interest.

### **Current State of Japanese Art Studies in the UK**

Perhaps what many people in Japan do not fully realize is that contemporary Japanese crafts are already in collections and museums throughout the UK and displayed for the most part not in a special “Japan” section, but rather as an integral part of general craft trends, or in the context of East Asian living art traditions. Individual “national” labels are being dropped and I would argue that this probably helps with receptivity among the younger generation. The Royal Museum and Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh through autumn 2005 is exhibiting three generations of the Kondo family’s porcelain work together in one case against the backdrop of examples from East Asian art history (including Jōmon pots from the Munro Collection). Kondo Takahiro spent last year at Edinburgh College of Art, and this certainly had an impact on the appreciation of his and of contemporary Japanese ceramics in Scotland.

At the same time in a special exhibition, the craft galleries on the ground floor of the Royal Museum in the most prominent place at the entrance have Japanese, Scottish, and other European objects in the same cases joined together, which explore a certain medium or technique. Japan is certainly perceived as part of the norm, or a leader in terms of contemporary world craft, which is good news for Japanese craft. Unfortunately, for other areas of Japanese art, this is still not the case.

The year 2005 was EU-Japan year.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis has been on the contemporary and popular culture level, such as *anime*, manga, and photography. The interest

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2 See <http://www.eu-japan.net>

in Japan and what Douglas Gray in a Foreign Policy article has labelled “Japan’s Gross National Cool” is at an all time high in Europe and the UK.<sup>3</sup> You can hear people on the London or Edinburgh streets saying “lets do sushi” for lunch, Japanese architects such as Itō Tōyō (b. 1941) are well known, Japanese fashion is very popular, Miyazaki Hayao’s (b. 1941) latest film *Howl’s Moving Castle* is a big hit in the United Kingdom, a first for *anime*, and mistaken kanji and hiragana tattoos and T-shirts appear everywhere, even in Norwich. The problem is that it is “soft” (what the Harvard sociologist Joseph Nye terms “soft power”). Essentially it is an influential and popular fad, but with no underpinning to help it grow into something more substantial and lasting. So while Japan is omnipresent in UK popular culture, there is still little in depth understanding of Japan and its artistic heritage among the general populace.

There is generally a “good will” towards Japan, an interest in Japan, and a willingness to receive more from Japan. The omens are positive for future growth and collaboration, especially for the Japanese crafts. However there are distinct challenges ahead, challenges that should be met on various levels by Japanese and European scholars, artists, and interested parties working together on partnership initiatives and collaborations, in face to face encounters through workshops, focused exhibitions, and interactive displays.

Exhibitions on Japan to celebrate EU-Japan Year in the UK reveal popular currents in Britain: the Surrey Institute of Art and Design held a NUNO textile exhibition (October-December 2005), the Victoria and Albert Museum had a special textile and metalwork exhibition in the Toshiba Galleries; the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University had “Beauty of the Four Seasons,” the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation had an exhibition on *Tradition in the Making: Takeshi Kitamura and the Usuhata Group*, and the British Museum held *Kabuki Heroes on the Osaka Stage 1780-1830* and hosted Nakamura Ganjiro III performances). The Barbican Art Gallery, London held a large Araki Nobuyoshi (b. 1940) photography show entitled *Araki: Self, Life, Death*, and the Japanese Embassy in London has an exhibition of *nuido*—Japanese embroidery. What these recent UK Japan-related exhibitions reveal is an interest in nineteenth century to contemporary Japanese arts and crafts, and particularly arts that have a resonance in popular or fashionable culture, such textiles, performance,

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3 Gray 2002. (<http://www.foreignpolicy.com/issue/maviune/2002/mcgray.html>).

photography, and prints.

It is just in this type of environment that Japanese crafts can find a new foothold and become increasingly popular in the UK and Europe if introduced in a coherent fashion that respects the particular medium in context but also allows it to be translated to address currently popular issues and aesthetics.

### **The British Museum and Japan**

While times are changing and the idea of the “nation” as protector of its regional industries has been downplayed in recent times, the role of a national museum in the promotion of craft media is of continuing significance in the UK (as mentioned above with the Royal Collections and the Museum of Scotland). Certainly this is true with the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), whose emphasis is on design. The V&A recently completed their British Galleries, which are striking not only for their breadth and well thought out presentation, but also for the complete and natural integration of craft with other media.

The British Museum has had a long history with Japan and it began with Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), its founder. At a recent symposium at Kyōto Zōkei Daigaku, chaired by Professor Haga Toru, the audience were asked how many people knew the name of Sir Hans Sloane. The teaching staff naturally all raised their hands, yet the other members of the audience did not. The case of Sir Hans Sloane is instructive as one such early example of a study of East-West relations, innovation and philanthropy that needs to be encouraged today. Sloane purchased manuscripts and objects from the widow and nephew of Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716) after Kaempfer’s death. Kaempfer served from 1690-92 in Japan as the Dutch East India Company (VOC) doctor living in the Dutch compound of Deshima, and had visited Kyoto and Edo.

When Kaempfer died in 1716 his book on Japan was still in manuscript form. Sloane paid for it to be translated into English and printed in London in 1727. Kaempfer’s *The History of Japan* was an immediate best seller. The European image of Japan in the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries practically rested on Kaempfer’s book, and was quoted by Kant, Goethe, and Voltaire. As Professor Takashina Shūji and others have pointed out, the book was brought back to Japan soon after publication and translated for the bakufu. Kaempfer’s use of the term “closed country” became

the term *sakoku*, which has since come to describe Tokugawa international relations.

Sloane went on to found the British Museum with a bequest made at his death of his collections, two libraries, and his house in 1753. Kaempfer's Japanese objects were part of that initial bequest to the nation and were duly accessioned into the new national museum. Among these items were three Utsutsugawa stoneware bowls bought just after they were made (contemporary craft of its time) as well as Hizen porcelain for domestic use, but unfortunately no Kyōyaki. Thankfully there is now a much better representation of Kyoto ceramic wares at the British Museum, though not as comprehensive as the Kyoto ceramics in the V&A's collections.

One of the more popular exhibitions in recent periods at the Japanese Galleries in the British Museum has been the Saga Contemporary Ceramics exhibition 2000-2001. The exhibition was organized by the Saga Ceramic Art Association with prefectural support; each of the sixty-two participating potters displayed two pieces, donating one to the permanent collection of the British Museum. The public reacted with enthusiasm and many people of all ages went to see the exhibition. Several factors help to explain its unexpected popularity: the exhibition was free, there was a good English language catalogue that explained processes and the potters' thoughts with photographs that was not expensive, and there was a comprehensive educational program that accompanied the exhibition with the potters visiting the show. What could have been improved, according to comments made at the time, was the addition of a video or further explanation by the potters in the exhibition area itself. People wanted to know more not just about process, but what the potters were actually thinking or feeling about their work. In addition, many of the pieces were of similar large size (bowls and large dishes). Viewers wanted to see more diversity of shape and some would have appreciated smaller pieces as well. Common questions asked at the time were: "What is the role or function of these pieces?" and "Why are they so large?"

There is a clear shift in aesthetics, visible in Europe as well as in Japan, which is essentially a de-emphasis on the importance of the single object as a stand-alone work of art and a growing interest in the object in context or in process, the object as a dynamic. Alternatively, it could be that the viewer feels involved in the process itself as an act of discovery of participation in the object's meaning. This viewpoint was reinforced to me a few years ago during a meeting with Professor Tsuji Nobuo



and Tim Clark, during which we conceived a *Kazari* exhibition. One of the most repeated comments on the exhibition was that viewers were delighted to see media combined and displayed together, for example screens, textiles, ceramics, and lacquer shown in varying contexts. In conclusion it could be argued it was the mix, and even juxtaposition, of the media which excited the viewers. These comments all point to a new signification for the object: the finished object appears to be only part of the story, perhaps part of a narrative. The key to acceptance is to have the viewer become involved in the narrative and to engage the viewer in dialectic. The Japanese Galleries at the British Museum have just been refurbished and now host a permanent display that opened on 13 October 2006. The Galleries will from now on be constantly open, with individual exhibits permanently rotating, so that any day of the week, and whenever the British Museum is open, visitors can see examples of Japanese art and crafts in all its diversity from the Jōmon period to the present day.

In addition, a special exhibition entitled *Crafting Beauty in Contemporary Japan (Waza no bi): Celebrating 50 Years of the Japanese Traditional Art Crafts Association* will open from 19 July to 21 October 2007 in the Hotung Gallery (Room 35), above the historical Reading Room in the Great Court of the British Museum. Japanese art, and in particular Japanese ceramics, lacquer, textiles, wood, and metal work can thus be viewed in two separate areas of the British Museum at the same time this summer and autumn. This will be the first time that such a comprehensive exhibition of modern art crafts from Japan will be on display in the British Museum and it also marks the first temporary Japanese exhibition to be held in the Hotung Gallery. With a renewed emphasis on modern expression in Japanese art and crafts at the British Museum, it is hoped that this special exhibition will draw attention among the general public to the dynamism and technical prowess of Japanese art craft artists (*kōgeika*) working today. The fundamental aim behind the exhibition is to show that craft artists in Japan maintain traditional high levels of skill while infusing sublime and modern beauty in their work, even as the country has become one of the most advanced industrial nations. The exhibition is organized in conjunction with the Crafts Gallery, Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art and the Kyoto National Museum of Modern Art, and co-curated by the Crafts Gallery Director, Kaneko Kenji, with support from his curators Moroyama Masanori and Kida Takuya. In addition, the Kyoto textile artist Moriguchi Kunihiko (b. 1941) has provided support liaising with the Japanese Traditional Art Crafts Association and various artists when called upon to do so.

### **Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury**

The Sainsbury family is one of the current leading benefactors to the arts, sciences, and education in the United Kingdom. For her services to Japanese art over a long period of time, Lady Sainsbury was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun with Neck Ribbon from the Japanese government in 2003. Our trustee, Dame Elizabeth Esteve-Coll, former director of the V&A Museum, has just been awarded the same honor on 3 November 2005. Here I very briefly discuss the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (SCVA) and its collection of Japanese objects, and the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures (SISJAC), both based in Norwich about four kilometers apart. The Sainsbury family made their first purchase of a Japanese object in 1963 by acquiring a small Jōmon figurine. They have continued to collect Japanese Buddhist and Shinto sculpture, painting, Negoro lacquerware, and ceramics. Lisa Sainsbury's passion, however, lies in craft, and in particular with ceramics and wood and was an early patron of Lucie Rie (1902-1995) and Hans Coper (1920-1981). She continues to patronize crafts made by young artists, including a recent silver vessel by Suzuki Hiroshi. All objects have been given to the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts (SCVA) at the University of East Anglia, and many are on permanent or rotating display and accessible to the general public six days a week.

The Sainsburys endowed an Institute with a mission to promote the study of material and visual cultures of the Japanese archipelago, and in doing so the Institute hopes to act as a catalyst for international research in the field. Another aim is to gather printed resources (such as books, catalogues, and journals) in a Norwich-based lending library so that scholars throughout Europe will have access to Japanese language materials on arts and cultures. The Institute furthers its mission through two core activities: *engaging* international scholars, postgraduate students, and staff in a collaborative and active research network, and; *disseminating* the results of these researches through special projects, symposia, monthly lecture series, publications, and through the internet. The Institute's Lisa Sainsbury Library started with some of Janet Leach's ceramic books, which were partially originally owned by Bernard Leach. The library now has over 20,000 items listed on our website in English and in Japanese.

The Institute also currently has joint research and project cooperation agreements with the British Museum in the UK, Ritsumeikan's Art Research Center in Kyoto,

the COEs in Kokugakuin University for Jōmon studies, Kyushu University for international archaeology, as well as a new agreement with Niigata Prefectural History Museum to help collect books and reports throughout Japan in order to send them periodically to SISJAC. All of these agreements are quite active and involve members of the Institute and its affiliates, and Fellows and associated visiting scholars travel back and forth between Europe and Japan to complete specific projects. With Niigata Prefectural Museum and with Kokugakuin University we hope to promote an awareness of Japanese prehistoric ceramic culture in Europe. I feel strongly that understanding of past craft manifestations can only help strengthen an interest and understanding of contemporary craft traditions. The Sainsbury Institute also holds public lectures, scholarly symposia, and academic workshops throughout the UK, mostly in conjunction with other institutes. All of our current and future projects are premised on joint collaborations and partnership funding. This may form part of an answer to future negotiations of Japanese international craft awareness in Europe: partnership projects where responsibilities and funding is shared through a network of support systems, with results that are transferable.

### **Crafts and Craft in the UK**

The status of craft in general has risen in the UK as industrial prowess has declined. Once proud of its ability to compete with China in the eighteenth century, Wedgwood has been outsourced to China since 2003 making national identity with craft media difficult. Economics and the economic situation are important, forming part of the strategy for craft resurgence, and the growing consumer base in the UK since the 1970s has aided craft resurgence in no small measure. Another instructive example comes from the United States: North Carolina did research and realized that craft brings more money into the State than the sale of tobacco and accordingly they set up the Center for Craft Creativity and Design in Ashville, which is active in the promotion, education, and dissemination of craft.

Websites, think tanks, private/matching government funds, new craft textbooks, museum exhibitions, publication support, travel grants, and exhibitions are all needed to help support the craft industry. In addition, media coverage is essential to provide opportunity for craft exposure and new thinking required in order to break the mold to attract media attention. New ways to explore craft and food relationships in order to appeal to the public and to showcase the important role of craft in adding to the quality of life is essential. One suggestion might be for designated Living

National Treasures in Japan to act as cultural ambassadors as well as preservers of the flame of their area of expertise.

What is basically called for is the robust engagement of craft as a global phenomenon in regional manifestations that has continuing resonance to quality of life today. In Britain both private and public initiatives have long been proactive in supporting craft and industry. In 1754 (one year after the British Museum's founding) the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers, and Commerce was set up to support regional craft and industry such as metalwork and textiles. Today there are initiatives such as the British Council Art on Line, which has some eight thousand works (80 percent on tour at any one time). The British Council, which has had works on tour in places such as Malaysia and Kenya, is currently sponsoring DesignUK in Japan. Furthermore, the V&A Museum provides money every year to collect contemporary craft in different regions. A new journal will be launched in 2007 published by Berg (Oxford) called *The Journal of Modern Craft* (edited by Tanya Harrod, Ned Cooke, and Glen Adamson) which will be peer reviewed and is attracting a lot of attention.

The Crafts Council, founded in 1971, spearheads a number of craft awareness programs and thus perhaps has the greatest recent significance. It receives an annual grant from the government which is matched in part by partnership funds for specific activities such as the Jerwood Prize. It has exhibition spaces, library, bookshop and shop, as well as a magazine, grants for craftspeople, education programs, crafts fairs, and close links with regions and a craft collection. The Crafts Council Collection is Britain's national collection of contemporary crafts, established in 1972 and comprising around one thousand objects covering a wide range of craft disciplines. Its purpose is to lend outstanding works for public display throughout the country, with handling sessions available for school children, and it makes purchases regularly by committee (which includes makers as well as academics).

There is a renaissance of sorts of craft in the UK, in part because of the growth in degree courses from the 1960s, the Craft Council, *Craft Magazine* (1973), and Craft Council offices in regional areas throughout the UK with gallery space. The Craft Council has helped to counter what Martina Margetts from the Royal College of Art has termed "the fatal alliance of craft and amateur ruralism: mugs and mohairs against mulberry jam." The Council has helped to raise standards and training levels,

which has been complemented by an increasing affluent middle-class consumer base willing to buy good craft. Margetts points out that the main preoccupation of UK craftspeople today is: "To make work which offers a contemporary interpretation of applied art and ornament in the home, which intrinsically explore meaning, function and form, and which also articulate their space in a new way, catalysts for changing perception."<sup>4</sup>

Movement away from national and nation identification to that of both global fluidity and region to region (glo-cal) is certainly gaining momentum. This can be easily seen in the Jerwood Prize award this year. Mori Junko, a metalsmith, one of the finalists in the prize, and the people's choice for the prize, is Japanese but lives in the UK, and is currently working in Canberra as part of an international exchange of artisans. Metal in Britain is recently one of the more exciting craft mediums, mostly because of a movement away from working only in fine metal like silver. Reflecting the dynamism in the medium, the Jerwood Prize focused on metal this year for the first time.

The Jerwood Charity and the Crafts Council started awarding the Jerwood Prize eleven years ago for excellence and innovation in the crafts field, each year focusing on a different medium. This year was the first for metal and the award was increased to 30,000 pounds, the equivalent of a Turner Prize for craft. The exhibition is still on in London, accompanied by a publication, and later will tour throughout the country. When I went to visit I was impressed with the large number of young people intently examining each work. I think the success of the exhibit was in part because of its presentation. The theme was the Periodic Table (of elements, derived in the late nineteenth century by the Russian Scientist Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev, 1834-1907). Each of the eight finalists has their own interactive booth (based on an element) where you could hear their voices and ideas on the objects and the field in general. Some had video installations, or drawings and photos that the artisans had chosen. Written comments from the viewers were encouraged and then posted on the exhibition wall near the objects. The objects themselves were professionally presented with good lighting. The eight finalists reveal the new reality of British craft. While all live in the UK, only two are British by birth; the others are from Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, and Japan. The organizers claimed: "They

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4 Margetts 1993.

actively embraced connections with the characteristics of other materials—not a denial of metal but an exploration of possibilities, that challenge our perception of form, material and process in metal.” The winner was Simone ten Hompel (1960) from Germany, who completed her Masters at the RCA and currently teaches at London Metropolitan University and Camberwell College.

She states that she believes if an object is functional, then it should function well. But she shifts her definition of function to read: “the function of an object might be as a vessel to contain things as a body contains a spirit or two objects might only function when they are brought together being useless on their own.” She started as an apprentice to a blacksmith at age twelve. She notes that that Constable called painting another word for feeling. She feels the same way about metal.

Mori Junko was born in Yokohama in 1974 and was the youngest of the group. She graduated from Musashino Art University and then came to Camberwell. Using traditional blacksmithing techniques, Mori’s growing form pieces are created through the production of multiples, each individually hand forged and therefore unique despite their similar appearance. She received the Craft Councils’ new initiative “Next Move” placement, as was a maker-in-residence at Liverpool Hope College. She states that she does not like ready mades, and that function plays no role in her work. For her, craft equals skill. She adds that she is obsessed with material, and does not have anything particular to communicate.

The other finalist from Japan is Suzuki Hiroshi. Suzuki was born in Sendai in 1961, and his father was a goldsmith. He also graduated from Musashino Art University and came to the UK to pursue a degree at Camberwell College and the Royal College of Art (graduated in 1999). He states that he does not use designs or models, but is inspired by water, fire, air, and sheet metal. When asked about functionality, he replied, “Although my objects may not be functional in an everyday sense, their functional form gives the viewer a path into interpreting them.” His work is in the V&A, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Chongju City Hall, and the Craft Council as well as in the Sainsbury Centre. Another finalist, Hans Stofer from Switzerland, who incorporates humor in his work, sums up the feeling of the group when he wrote: “I see the world through my hands.”

The Jerwood Prize is an example of innovation and dynamism needed on a larger

scale to revitalize craft in general. What was particularly telling was the large media coverage, as well as the high number of visitors, many of whom were school groups and younger audiences. The approach was innovative and interactive, focusing on process and incorporating the viewer into direct communication with the objects. The objects were not alone, but set off together in a sophisticated way that did not downplay their individual importance.

### **Conclusion: Ideas for the Future of Craft in Kyoto**

In conclusion, I would suggest that more prominent promotion of contemporary Japanese crafts in Europe is possible and, in fact, timely; however, new approaches should be pursued. There is a need to move beyond exhibitions with a single theme or focusing on a single artist that fail to resonate with a larger educational agenda, but at the same time the scope should not be too diluted or educational opportunities lost by being too diverse. What appears to work best are focused exhibitions backed up with strong educational support on multiple levels. Face to face interaction is the most effective. But an understanding of the shifting patterns of reception, i.e., the shift of interest in the individual objects to objects in context or objects in process is of critical importance.

Some of these comments apply to other art forms as well. As Kim Young-Soon, Artistic Director of Visual Arts, Seoul Art Center, has sagely pointed out. The Second Yokohama Triennale is one such a case in point (*Yokohama 2005: International Triennale of Contemporary Art*). The exhibition has changed focus from three years ago, and the artist Kawamata Tadashi is currently in charge artistically and specializes in work-in-progress installations. The exhibition with artists from thirty countries or regions is all about process with the fixed theme of the Circus. Most artists have interactive or video installations in contained environments so that the viewer could feel part of the display. The idea of country affiliation of each artist or group is played down; what was highlighted were regional groupings (Southeast Asia), or mixed groupings (Japan with other Asian countries or with European members). Whether one appreciates the content or not, the exhibition is being visited by significant numbers of younger people (despite the high entry fee) and represents a new trend applicable to other artistic fields.

The popularity of the Jerwood Charity Prize at the Craft Council among youth from many nations is also striking. The metal exhibit was exhibited in a particular way to

respond to current interests in process, meaning, and context. The recordings of the artists' voices in separate booths were in constant use; some booths even had lines of visitors. The video and pictures panels of the objects in context (or in nature) or with other types of objects were instructive. Mostly, the engagement with the Periodic Table, an appeal to science and technology with craft and process, was compelling. This small exhibition was very popular and importantly garnered a large amount of media coverage. Perhaps something similar could help to provide one such avenue for the introduction of Kyoto crafts among younger audiences.

Academically, the most productive working unit appears to be workshops, where small groups can encounter one another at a face-to-face level. Think tanks and research institutes (and universities) in Japan need to create graduate level opportunities for international dialogue and communication with students and artists interested in craft, and ensure that Japanese art and crafts graduates who are fluent in international cultural trends can find a place in Japan in the future. Indeed the emphasis on the future of the academic study of Japanese craft needs to be on the next generation, building confidence in them, their studies, in Japanese craft history as a world art phenomena, and to create a vision of world art and craft where Japan has an integrated role. Beyond this, libraries and websites need to be developed and expanded in both Japanese and European languages. Japanese craft historians should be encouraged to reach outside of Japan and publish in European languages in European scholarly journals.

The twenty-first century needs visionaries such as Sir Hans Sloane, when he commissioned the translation of Kaempfer's *History of Japan* and created the British Museum as an educational tool for the nation in the eighteenth century. Importantly, we now need a larger vision that encompasses the global community, while respecting and even privileging local craft traditions and histories that give and spread confidence and understanding.

The future lies not in picking into the bones of the past, but rather in engagement with the contemporary informed by experience in the past. Part of the problem in Europe and America is with the conflicting definitions of the terms "craft" and "art" or even art craft. The word craft has a plurality of meaning and there is general confusion about its definition. Crafts need confidence and clarity. I would argue that the symposium and the work that has been conducted at Nichibunken in the last



three years on this subject under Inaga Shigemi's careful direction has helped to bring these issues into focus and will provide pathways forward.

**Website addresses:**

2121- The Textile Vision of Reiko Sudo and NUNO: [www.2121Vision.com](http://www.2121Vision.com)

British Council Art On Line: [www.britishcouncil.org/collection](http://www.britishcouncil.org/collection)

The Craft Council: [www.craftcouncil.org.uk](http://www.craftcouncil.org.uk)

'Collect': [www.craftcouncil.org.uk/collect](http://www.craftcouncil.org.uk/collect)

Center for Craft Creativity and Design: [www.craftcreativitydesign.org](http://www.craftcreativitydesign.org)

Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation: [www.daif.org.uk](http://www.daif.org.uk)

EU-Japan Year: [www.eu-japan.net](http://www.eu-japan.net)

Royal Museum and Museum of Scotland: [www.nms.ac.uk](http://www.nms.ac.uk)

Yokohama 2005: International Triennale of Contemporary Art: [www.yokohama2005.jp](http://www.yokohama2005.jp)

**Main UK Craft-related Journals:**

*Crafts, Decorative and Applied Arts* (Crafts Council, published six times a year)

*Crafts Review* (Tring, England, Action Movement for Crafts)

*Federation for British Craft Societies Newsletter* (London)

*The Journal of Design History* (Oxford University Press, published four times a year)

*The Journal of Modern Craft* (planned from 2007; based in London published by Berg, edited by Glenn Adamson, Ned Cooke, and Tanya Harrod)

*Interpreting Ceramics* (on-line journal based in Wales) [www.uwic.ac.uk/ICRC](http://www.uwic.ac.uk/ICRC)

*The Master Craftsman* (Burgess Hill, The Guild of Master Craftsmen, UK)

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