

## **Future Portrait**

A constructed glimpse of tomorrow

*Future Portrait* looks at the future, using photography, portraiture, constructed environments and montage as a window to examine what may come.

This exegesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Creative Media by Research

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**Declaration by the Candidate**

I, Bronek Kozka, declare that:

Except where due acknowledgement has been made, this work is mine alone;

- a) this work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award;
- b) the content of the exegesis is the result of work that has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved program;
- c) editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Signed:

Date:

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## Introduction

### ***“They've got our future, damn it.”***

It's not the shiny future of jet packs and food pills — oh no, that's not what Japan is about. Nevertheless, they've got it and they're living in it, damn them. They've got express trains that run on time and accelerate so fast they push you back into your seat like an airliner on take-off. They've got skyscrapers with running lights, looming out of the sodium-lit evening haze — a skyline just like the famous night time scene from Blade Runner except for the shortage of giant pyramids (and they're building one of those out in Tokyo bay) ... six story high pornography boutiques that sell Hello Kitty! novelty toys on the ground floor. And 200mph super-express trains blasting between arcologies through a landscape scorched by the waste heat of a hundred million air conditioning units. And beer vending machines on street corners.

(Stross 2007)

In this quote, Charlie Stross captures the excitement and wonder I felt when I visited Japan for the first time in 1995. It was a stopover on my way to the U.S. and Europe. My expectations were nil; the only reason I was there was because it was the cheapest flight I could get. On my first night in Tokyo, I wrote in a letter to a friend; “I'm in the future, this *is* the future!”

So now, many years and many trips to Japan later, I find myself exploring that world, that possible future which first captured my imagination in 1995. The world has changed in so many ways since then, but somehow, for me at least, that excitement and appetite for the future remains. For me, Japan is still the embodiment of the future.

*Future Portrait* looks at the future. Using portraiture as a window it will examine the aesthetics, the technologies and the people of the future. Portraiture is an ideal vehicle for this exploration because it allows us an individual and personal connection with the sitters, giving us insight into their world and existence. Portraiture's many diverse styles (formal, street, environmental) are considered as portals to 'what may be'. My main goal for this project is to create a body of work that visually explores the ideas, concepts and thoughts explored in imagery from the realm of Japanese art and culture, the West's perception of Japan, and both Eastern and Western science fiction visions of futuristic dystopia.

It is impossible to explore the future without an understanding of the past. As much as this project is all about looking forward and reaching for the future, the basis of my work is influenced by a long visual history. Although the emphasis is on portrait photography, I believe it is necessary to cast a broad net when looking for artistic inspiration and influence. In the first part of Chapter One, my research explores pre-photographic portraits and portrayals of society from key periods in Japanese history, including the Heian, Edo and Meiji periods. In particular, I discuss the 'global view' that was often presented on traditional screens and the stories and activities of everyday life which unfolded in the Emakimono Japanese Picture Scrolls. I also look at the influence of the Dutch in Nagasaki from the mid-nineteenth century. They introduced photography studios, took the first images of Japanese people and taught photographic processes to the locals (Tucker 2003). Hence, for the first time, Westerners' views of Japan and the Japanese were captured with photography. I also consider European photographers' perceptions of this new world by analysing the imagery they created with Edward Said's notions of Orientalism in mind.

In the second part of Chapter One, I look at how World War II, the start of the atomic age and the birth of the Japanese economic miracle impacted on Japanese photographic industries and practices. Visions of the future were conceived via Japanese anime, and I look closely at the rise of Manga illustration and animation in Japan, paying particular attention to the work of Tezuka Osamu. That the development and popularity of anime have increased, from Manga-style illustrations through to 3D rendering, is unsurprising as anime portrays incredibly detailed and richly conceived visions of the future. Therefore, I look specifically at how Manga and anime artists portray and interpret the futuristic worlds they create.

The development and proliferation of photography in post-war Japan is impressive and very much in step with the way the nation embraced the rebuilding of the country. Photography proved to be a very useful tool in helping Japan re-evaluate and examine itself. Post-war technological

developments established the industry we know today and the ever-converging technologies of capture devices, communications and means of presentation are helping define a whole new type of image making.

With this era in mind, I have made a brief survey of contemporary photographers and their work, with a focus on those artists who create and construct their images with the aid of sets, props and costumes. This kind of 'fictional' photography serves as a context with which to view my work. This will be followed by a consideration of artists whose work directly relates to my own imagery. The photographic artist Mariko Mori is of particular interest. Her self-portraits combine science fiction-inspired otherworldly costumes and layered photographic imagery with Pop Art influences, and are often juxtaposed with contemporary Japanese life. Mi-Zo Minori and Zoren Gold's stylistic combinations of photography, hand drawing and digital illustration set in futuristic, dreamlike cityscapes, are also an inspiration. Julie – Samurai Girl's work references popular culture while creating images that allude to the future. While technology enables and informs my work and the work of these artists, it is necessarily fundamental in the construction and appearance of the work.

Technology is embedded in both the practice (the doing), and the concept (the meaning). In Chapter Two, I begin to look more closely at the idea of *possible futures* and how they are presented to us by artists, illustrators and film-makers. As Charlie Stross suggests in the opening quote, the future is not the smooth, functional utopia offered to us by Apple Mac advertisements, where everything is white, clean, perfectly interconnecting and working seamlessly. Rather, it is a dystopian future, a ramshackle "sprawl" (Gibson 1984) of uncontrolled development punctuated by technology and decay. The opening sentence of Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) epitomises that bleak view, "*The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel.*" As an artistic practitioner I wonder, "*Why are we so bleak (about the future) yet so excited ? Is dystopia our utopia?*"

In the exegesis, I will contextualise my work by looking at how other non-Japanese contemporary photographers, artists, film-makers and authors have chosen to represent and describe Japan, in particular those concerned with technology and futurist representations. Accepting that orientalist depictions of Japan have played a role in my work is essential to understanding my images. It therefore has to be acknowledged that what attracted me to this subject matter is undeniably tied up with an orientalist view of Japan.

Finally, I present more detail about my stylistic choices in subject matter, the stories I want to tell and the methods of their display and presentation. These are all intrinsically linked to the concepts of future and technology. For example, a central idea explored in my work is that of the '*exploded moment*', the idea of capturing more than a single view at any given moment. This is something that can be seen in emakimono, screens, through to contemporary Manga.

Importantly, this project is not a business forecast, nor is it a strict social prediction. It is a journey, a 'what if', an informed and researched (if slightly fanciful) glimpse into one possible future through the eyes of a Westerner whose obsession with Japan, its technology, gadgets and visions of the future, has manifested itself into a body of work called *Future Portrait*.

## Pre-photographic depictions of Japan & Photosynth

### ***Emakimono***

Starting in the latter stages of the Heian period (794-1185) and continuing through to the Azuchi Momoyama period (1573-1603), the artistic practice of emakimono developed and flourished in Japan. These hand-painted scrolls most probably originated in India, and then travelled from China to Japan in the sixth or seventh centuries, along with the spread of Buddhism (Seckel 1959). An emakimono is an illustrated narrative that unfolds as one unrolls the scroll. The name emakimono, or emaki, dates back to the Edo period. Prior to this, scrolls were named according to their specific content, followed by the suffix '-e', which indicated that they were paintings.

I am interested in both the content of emakimono and the construction and flow of narratives within them. They are essentially a roll of paper with an illustrated story on it. The narrative only reveals itself to the viewer as the viewer unrolls the scroll. Therefore there is an active involvement on the part of the viewer to *explore* the story, and 'consumption' is not a passive activity. I see a correlation in my own work, as the viewer – for want of a better term – interacts with a touch screen to explore the narrative of the work through the 'synth' of the scene.

### ***Photosynth***

A 'synth' is a 3D environment created, using Microsoft's Photosynth software, from many photographic images of a given space. Pattern recognition components compare portions of images to create points, which are then compared to convert the image into a model. The program works by analysing multiple photographs taken of the same area. Each photograph is processed by noting specific features, like the corner of a window frame or a door handle. Photographs that share features are then linked together. When the same feature is found in multiple images, its 3D position can be calculated. This model enables the program to show a particular area from various angles, based on the different angles found in the photographs. While the process works when only two photographs are used, it is better with more (180 Media 2007).

### ***Photosynth & Emakimono***

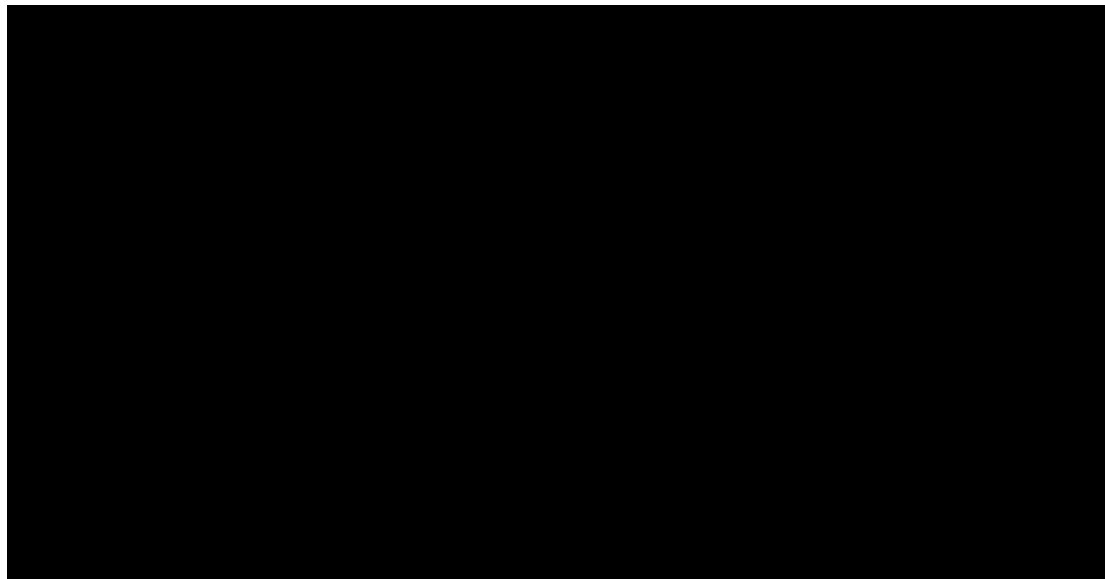
The content of the emakimono falls broadly into several main areas: historical stories, military stories, morality and preaching, stories of the Japanese spirit world (Kami), histories and stories of shrines and temples, and stories of famous Buddhist priests. Okada Yoshiyuki notes that:

Motivations and contexts for the production of emaki varied widely, from the artistic pictorial representation of religiously inspired literary fables, to the desire to transmit images of shrine precincts and rituals to future generations.

Yoshiyuki (2009)

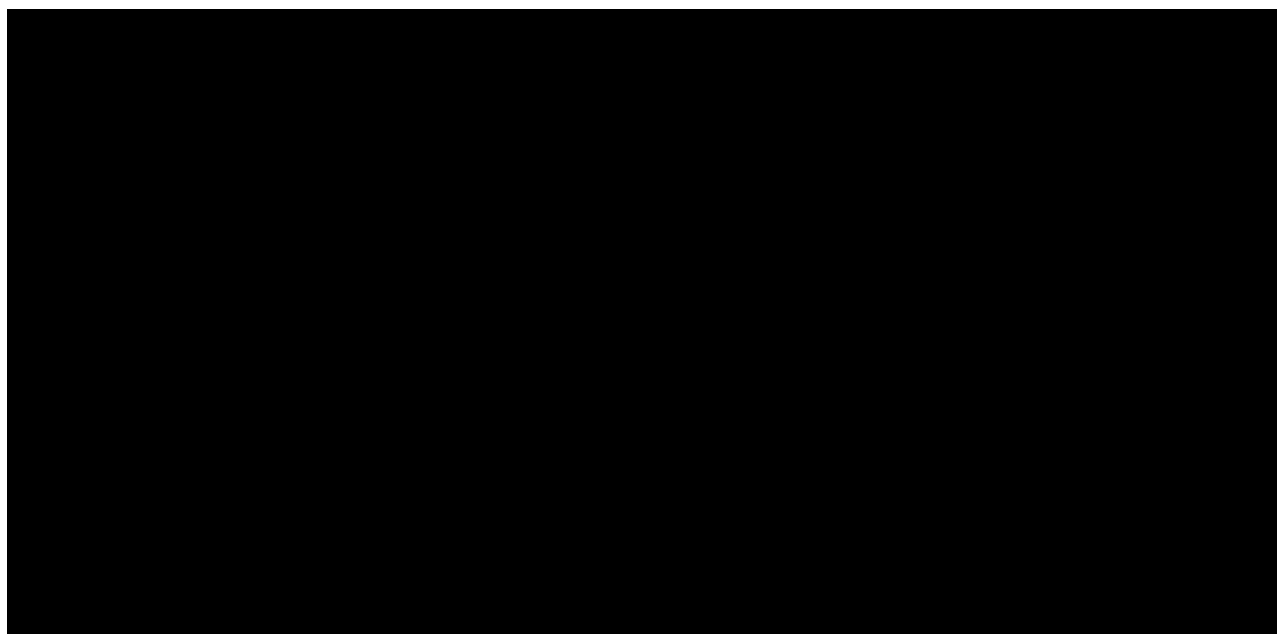
If a comparison is to be drawn between the Photosynth and emakimono, then an examination of content is also important. The Heiji scroll, *Night Attack Sanjo Palace*, tells the story of the Heiji Rebellion. It is a story about a triumphant battle in 1159. Photosynth technology is relatively new; it has not yet been embraced on a mainstream level and so it is unlikely that we would see the representation of the war in Iraq for example, appearing as a Photosynth. Even at the content consumer (viewing/interacting) level it is still in the domain of 'early adopters'. Thus far, content creation seems to be in the realm of 'tech-savvy' photographers interested in representing place, but not engaging with or exploring narrative. I have seen little or no content creation by practising artists, established or otherwise.





*Figure 1: Detail from Heiji Monogatari Emaki (Tale of the Heiji Rebellion), (Japanese Kamakura period thirteenth century)*

The Heiji Rebellion, which occurred late in 1159, represents a brief armed skirmish in the capital. One faction, led by Fujiwara Nobuyori in alliance with the warrior Minamoto Yoshitomo, staged a coup. In the scene depicted here, they surrounded the palace, captured the sovereign, placed him in a cart and then consigned the structure to flames. Even though Nobuyori and Yoshitomo were triumphant here, they later suffered defeat and death at the hands of their rival Kiyomori (Bowdoin College, Maine 2008)



*Figure 2: Detail from Heiji Monogatari Emaki (Tale of the Heiji Rebellion), (Japanese Kamakura period thirteenth century)*

Minh T. Nguyen's (2008) Photosynth of *Osaka Castle, Osaka, Japan* is an example of using the synth as a way of representing an area or a space to a distant audience. His work does not contain a message or story other than to convey an understanding of the space, how it looks, its detail and position. There is no intentional narrative in Nguyen's synth; the architecture, its function, its history and so on, might lead to points of discussion, but this is not necessarily the intent of the creator, nor are these discussion points embedded in the synth.

The *Heiji Monogatari Emaki (Tale of the Heiji Rebellion)* (thirteenth century) manages to capture a sense of energy and movement as part of the storytelling process. The narrative physically and temporally unfolds from right to left. Characters of significance, such as Fujiwara Nobuyori and Minamoto Yoshitomo in his distinctive red armour, both appear several times in the one emakimono, illustrating the temporal nature of this format. There are also several objects that appear and reappear. The cart that is used to take away the retired emperor Go-Shirakawa, can also be seen centrally positioned at the palace, towards the end of the screen surrounded by warriors, with Minamoto Yoshitomo close behind; and at the start of the emakimono.

Throughout my own work, it has been my intention to fully explore the use of Photosynth technology in a way that – in the spirit of the emakimono – incorporates narrative, storytelling and user-interaction.

### ***Types of Japanese Screens***

There are several types of Japanese screens. Decorative single panel screens, Tsutate (衝立障子) and Fusuma (襖), can slide from side-to-side and redefine spaces within a room, or act as doors. Byōbu (屏風, wind wall) are folding decorative screens made from several joined panels, and are also used to separate interiors and enclose private spaces. My main focus will be on the latter, the byōbu, as these illustrate the best examples of storytelling and, due to their relative transportability, are the most researched and well-documented.

As with much of Japan's art and culture, the painted screen can be traced back to China. Byōbu were introduced to Japan in the eighth century when, highly influenced by Chinese patterns, Japanese craftsmen started making their own byōbu. They come in many sizes and arrangements, most commonly as a set of two screens with six panels. They are usually 1.5 metres high by approximately 3.5 metres. Screens may depict a single composition but they often contain complementary themes, such as the seasons. Low two-panel screens, Nikyoku byōbu (二曲屏風), usually around 50cm, are generally found in smaller, more intimate spaces and are most often used for tea ceremonies. The Yonkyoku byōbu (四曲屏風), four-panel screens, are from the Kamakura and Muromachi periods. They were later used in Seppuku ceremonies and teahouse waiting rooms in the late Edo Period

### ***Themes of Screen Painting***

The subject matter of screens is in many ways similar to the content depicted on the emakimono. There is, however, a difference in the viewing and inter-activity required of the viewer. Screens are more passive and do not require the physical interaction that emakimono require. In my work I am interested in a discussion of byōbu pertaining to the subject matter, specifically during the Momoyama and Edo period. Genre painting, or the depictions of cultural ideas, philosophies and activities of the everyday, was revived from the Heian period and experienced a re-emergence in popularity during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Genre painting illustrates the world of ordinary Japanese people through depictions of daily work, household life, sickness and old age, sightseeing, leisure and amusements. In many ways, such imagery is directly related to genre photography of the late nineteenth century. Ann Yonemura (2008) writes, "Landscapes of the four seasons or of spring and autumn have been popular themes in Japanese screen painting since the fourteenth century." More importantly for my work, she also describes narrative themes based in Chinese and Japanese art; "Beginning in the sixteenth century, screens depicted genre scenes of picnics and other activities in the cities and countryside." (Yonemura 2008)

Daily life is often evident in Japanese screen art, but usually in the context of some event or ceremony that is unfolding. In Kano Naganobu's screen, a Momoyama period byōbu known as *Cherry Blossom Viewing*, we can see the celebration of the cherry blossom festival, Sakura Matsuri, of a noble family. In Kano Naganobu's screen, he depicts the prince surrounded by exquisitely dressed noble ladies while watching a group of dancers (see detail below). The author, Akiyama Terukazu (1977) asserts that "...the real theme of the picture, however, is the group of four dancers who, together with those on the right, form a merry ring under the full-blown cherry blossoms", which in turn relates to stylistic trends of genre painters and their "...fondness of lingering over the delineation of women's costumes, faithfully imitating rich fabrics, brocades, embroideries and hangings, whose manufacture was then greatly on the increase". (Terukazu 1977)

Interpretations of the work vary, but for me, the real interest in relation to my own work is in the portrayal of the ordinary. Below the prince, there are female servants preparing food while footmen rest under the building. It is this background detail of the ordinary activities of people out of focus that I explore in my adaptations of the Japanese folding screen.

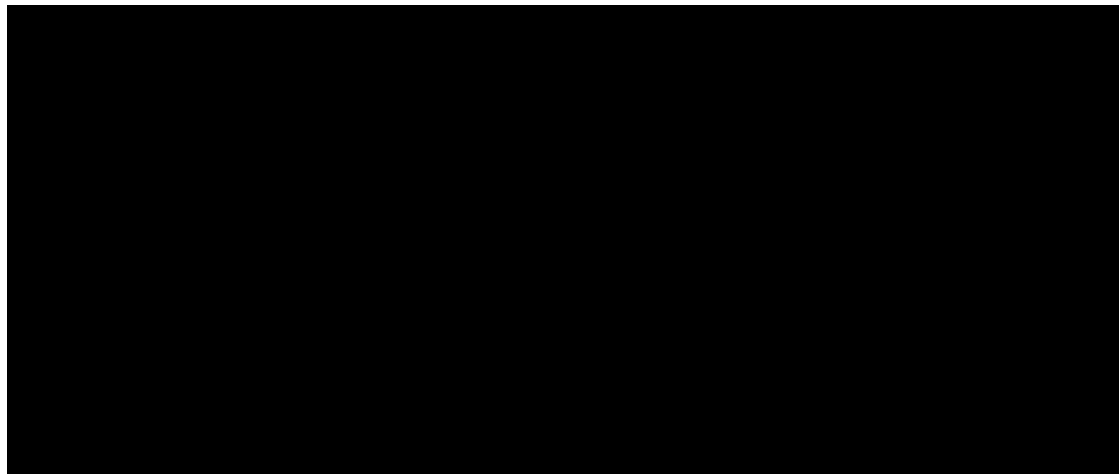


Figure 3: Kano Naganobu (1577–1654), *Cherry Blossom Viewing*, Momoyama period (1573–1615),

### **Machi-eshi**

Machi-eshi (city painters or popular painters) specialised in the production of genre screens. These painters, who were traditionally trained in the Kanō School, began to infuse their work with other techniques, including elements from the Tosa school. As Akiyama Terukazu explains, they:

...achieved a freer mode of expression better suited to the representation of contemporary life. In response to the taste of the public, their interest shifted, as we have seen, from general views to details; figure paintings in particular, above all of beautiful women, unaccompanied either by architecture or landscape, met with an immense success.

Akiyama Terukazu (1977)

This shift is important and can be largely attributed to the major social changes that took place during this period. Up to the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, artists were attached to the court, to the shogunate, or to various temples. Social and economic instability meant that many artists lost their patronage. Painters were forced to migrate to other cities to earn their livelihoods selling their paintings to townspeople. Members of the Tosa school (Tosaha 土佐派; in charge of the painting bureau at court) and Kanō school (Edo period 1603-1867) (Kanouha 狩野派; official painters of the shogunate), treated machi-eshi with a level of contempt. However, the machi-eshi were of their time. A growing, economically strong merchant class who had shifted away and begun commissioning smaller, more domestic paintings from the machi-eshi. This shift had an impact on the type, size, position and location of the works. Content was also changing, scenes of nobility and samurai were replaced with representations of the ordinary.

The machi-eshi were also important in that these artists were the first examples of 'freelancers' in the Japanese visual arts. As mentioned before, economic instability may have forced their hand; the machi-eshi engaged in commerce in ways their predecessors had not. As a result, the machi-eshi were on one hand more free in their selection of subject matter, but were now at the mercy of the market forces of supply and demand.

Shikomi-e were hand painted monochrome images. Their compositions were simple and their pictorial themes were easily accessible. Depictions of beautiful women and simple landscapes were common, due to their ease of production. But the reliance on the hand of the artist meant that, even with very simplistic scenes, the required quantities of shikomi-e could not be achieved. As Tashashi Kobayshi explains in *Ukiyo-e - An Introduction to Japanese Woodblock*:

The shikomi-e represents the first efforts of townsmen artists (machi-eshi) to respond the rising demand for paintings that could be produced in quantity and at affordable prices. Nevertheless, to the extent that shikomi-e were hand-painted original works, there were inherent limits to their potential as a mass produced, inexpensive art form. The solution to this problem ultimately depended on the development of techniques for large-scale reproduction through the medium of the woodblock print.

Tashashi Kobayshi (1992)

The woodblock print is not the first example of technology impacting on the arts in Japan, but it is the first time that the impact was seen across society. In the past, developments had occurred but these were at the level of technique, materials and styles. Unlike shikomi-e, woodblock printing also brought a level of complexity and depth to the artwork. Rich, colourful compositions replaced monochrome simplicity. Furthermore, the

woodblock brought images and art to the people. This democratisation of paintings and imagery in Japan contains echoes of what took place in the early days of photography. This extract is from John Tagg's, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, and the similarities between Tadashi Kobayashi's comments about shikomi-e paintings and woodblock prints and Tagg's discussion of the mechanisation of photography are striking:

As in the general tendency of manufacture in this period, the expansion of the market, with growing demand from larger and larger numbers, necessitated the mechanisation of the process of production and the replacement of expensive hand-made luxuries such as painted portraits by cheaper mechanical imitations.

Tadashi Kobayashi (1993)

The impact of the woodblock and the idea of democratisation of art resonate with my work with Photosynths, which are accessible to anyone online. I am interested in working with digital images, online presentation and the idea that a digital image can be reproduced infinitely without any loss of quality, or indeed any difference from the original.

### **Photography Arrives in Japan**

Photography first arrived in Japan during the final stages of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868). Under self-imposed isolation from rest of the world, it was through the small Dutch trading post in Nagasaki on the island of Kyōshū that photographic technology was first introduced to Japan. As Anne Wilkes Tucker (2003) points out in *The History of Japanese Photography*, the earliest recorded mention of photography is by Nagasaki merchant, Ueno Toshinojō: "A daguerreotype set, which is a tool for making a true copy, was brought to Nagasaki in 1843, but it was taken away and brought back again in 1848."

In 1848, the daguerreotype set was purchased by Ueno and delivered to the Satsuma domain, located in the southern part of Kyūshū; Satsuma was an influential area. Through exposure to the Dutch and a desire to develop economic and military power, it proved to be a fertile ground for Western learning and technology. "Photography was thus received into an environment of robust interest in science and technology." (Tucker et al. 2003)

However, due to lack of technical knowledge and experience, it wasn't until 1857 when Ichiki Shirō created the first known Japanese photograph, a portrait of his daimyo, Shimazu Nariakira. (The daimyo were powerful territorial lords who ruled most of Japan from their vast, hereditary land holdings.) In 1858, when Nariakira died, the daguerreotype was put on display at Shōkoku Shrine in the same way painted portraits and carved busts were enshrined for worship. Photographs then quickly became an accepted method for commemorating the dead. This is an early example of photography blending with, and modifying, Japanese society and customs. I believe the adoption of photography by powerful figures such as daimyo Shimazu Nariakira assisted in the proliferation of photography in Japan, and lay the foundations for Japan's ongoing attraction to and fascination with photography.



*Figure 4: Ichiki Shirō (1857)*

The signing of the 1854 Kanagawa Treaty officially ended Japan's isolation and policy of national seclusion. The United States-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce, or the 'Harris Treaty' of 1858, saw the ports of Nagasaki, Hakodate and importantly, Yokohama, opened up to foreign trade and settlement. This opened the door to Western photographers, which led to the establishment of photographic studios in Japan and the creation of a new industry. (Esenbel 2000).

Eliphalet Brown, an accomplished daguerreotypist, lithographer and artist who accompanied Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan, took the first photograph on Japanese soil. But it is those photographers who came into Japan after the country opened its ports who are more relevant to my work. These Western photographers (and later Japanese photographers), are in many ways the successors to the machi-eshi and the woodblock artists. Their motivation and the markets in which they thrived were very similar. As a direct result, their subject matter also consisted primarily of images of everyday life as well as portraits.

Another interesting aspect of this photographic practice relevant to my own work, is that these were Western photographers casting their gaze upon Japan. They were producing images for both the Japanese and their home markets. By looking at some of these early practitioners of photography in Japan, and by briefly examining their work, I hope to shed some light on their approach, how they saw Japan and how that has informed my work. Many of these photographers, including Japanese practitioners, were studio based and created or re-created the scenes they photographed, much in the same way as my images are constructed.

### ***Western Photographers in Japan***

Although it pre-dates the establishment of the Yokohama studios, it is important to mention Dr JLC Pompe van Meerdervoort, a Dutch physician with the Dutch East India Company who was based in Nagasaki at the 'factory' (Crombie 2004). It was Pompe van Meerdervoort who introduced Ueno Hikoma to photography and the chemical processes involved. Hikoma studied under Pompe van Meerdervoort and later, Swiss photographer P Rossier, before opening his own studio in Nagasaki in 1862 (Tucker 2003). I will refer to Hikoma's work in more detail, but for now, it is important to point out Rossier's importance in the development of Japanese photography via his own practice as well as his teaching of early Japanese practitioners. Rossier primarily produced 'stereo-view' images of locations and environments. It is his use of cutting edge technology to create a hyper-real experience for the viewer that is of interest to me.

Felice Beato settled in Yokohama in 1864. Beato's origins are not clear. The consensus seems to be that Beato was actually born in Corfu in 1834/5. During this period, Corfu was under control of the British, which made him a British citizen (Clarke J. 2001). The complex history of Beato's birthplace is something that he worked to his advantage. Through his British background, Beato was able to form ties with the British military establishment,

who provided transportation and access to areas other photographers envied. As Terry Bennett (2006) points out in *Photography in Japan 1853-1912*, this was a successful business strategy; "...getting access to warships as they came into port was something to which resident photographers aspired to. Taking group portraits of officers and crew aboard their ships was an effective way of eliciting multiple sales..." (Bennett 2006 p. 88).

In 1873, Beato's Greek heritage ideally positioned him to become the Consul General for Greece in Japan, solidifying his position in the ex-patriate and local community. This background is important to understanding Beato's work. He was primarily a businessman and as such, commerce and print sales mattered. His interests were not solely in the ex-patriate and European market. As Isobel Crombie (2004) points out in *Shashin – Nineteenth Century Japanese Studio Photography*, that in studio photography "...images were taken in a narrow stage like space with limited depth of field. It has been observed that the Japanese were initially not interested in these tableaux photographs." Beato's solution to this was to develop a new style, drawing on popular forms of local art. He embraced the aesthetics and subject matter of ukiyo-e prints (genre prints/painting) and went so far as to employ local artists to hand colour the prints, basing his colour palette on the inks, dyes and pigments used in woodblock prints. (Crombie 2004)

I draw parallels with Beato's practice, in that it directly relates to my own approach. I have chosen to use the aesthetics and presentation of Manga and anime in my use of particular skin tones, of lighting to create an illustrative hyper-real look, of utilising the Manga-style page divisions and of certain text overlays, much in the same way Beato used the aesthetics of ukiyo-e prints.



Figure 5: Kozka, *Meeting with Shoji (detail)* (2008)

Adolfo Farsari was another important Western photographer of the time who embraced Beato's approach of using local artists to hand colour works, but his souvenir photographs and albums were more squarely aimed at foreigners, namely tourists. His focus is evident in his choice of two types of subject matter: the scenery of Japan and the 'manners and customs' of its inhabitants. Terry Bennett explains that Farsari, while appearing to be social and on good terms with his local community, was in fact more comfortable "in his own company" and was described by his employees as "the serious one" (Bennett 2006). This possibly explains his focus on the Western market. It should also be noted that Farsari was one of the last Western photographers active in the fiercely competitive Yokohama photographic market. However, as Dr. Luke Gartlan (2004) points out in *In Search of Arcadia: Souvenir Photography in Yokohama, 1859-1900*, a photographic album of hand coloured images, depicting traditional scenes, customs and landscapes, would prove:

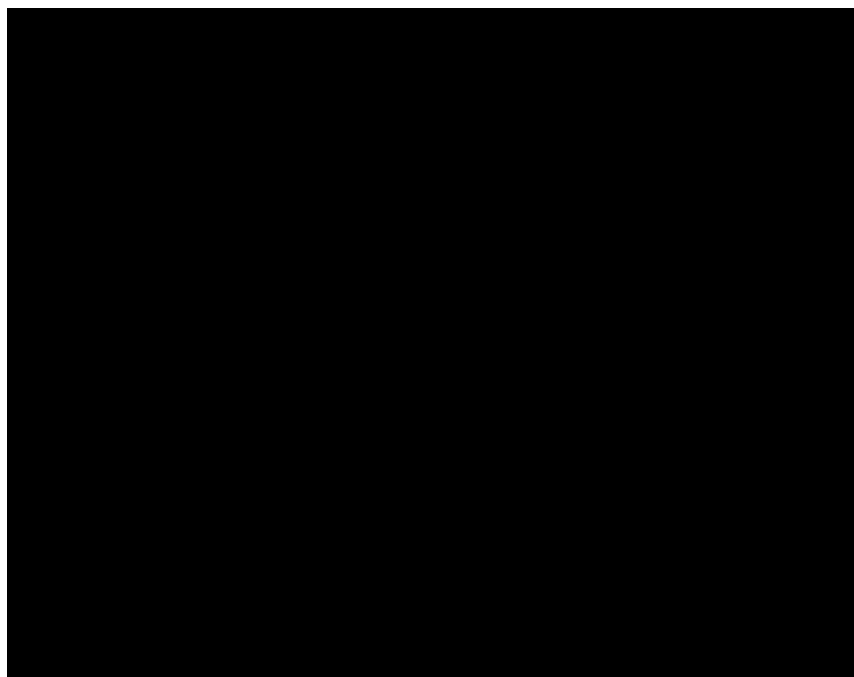
...an irresistible temptation. Alongside the usual selection of art objects and other 'curios', the bound volume of 'views and costumes' was an essential souvenir for those foreign travellers eager to commemorate their experiences and perceptions of Japanese society.

Gartlan (2004)

Isobel Crombie also reiterates Gartlan's sentiment by saying:

Carefully staged and exquisitely hand coloured, these photographs, often bound into sumptuous leather-embossed and lacquer albums, proved immensely popular for an overseas market...

Crombie (2004)



*Figure 6: Farsari's album cover, approx 1887*

Farsari's focus on the Western tourist market led to the creation of albums such as those Crombie describes, which would have had little or no interest to the local market. Their composition, construction and subject matter, while appearing very Japanese, only seemed so through Western eyes and tastes. This is something that I am acutely aware of in my work. While it is not something that I am actively or consciously trying to create, it nevertheless must be acknowledged.

## Post 1945, the bomb, photography, manga & the future

Having found the atomic bomb, we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor. The bomb will save thousands of American lives, we will use it again until Japan's ability to make war is completely destroyed: Only a Japanese surrender will stop us.

President Harry Truman (1945)

On the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, Emperor Hirohito accepted defeat: fifteen years of war had ended for Japan. As Iizawa Kōtarō (2003) explains this was the “end of the long ‘winter’ during which they (Japanese photographers) had been largely unable to obtain film stock and photographic paper, and, moreover, their freedom to take and publish photographs had been limited by a variety of restrictions” (Kotaro 2003 p.10).

### ***Post-War Japanese Photography: Photo-realism and Subjectivity.***

It should be pointed out that restrictions on photographers continued. The restrictions were part of the strict censorship enforced by the U.S. occupation forces, in particular regarding the depiction of atomic bomb survivors and related subject matter. After being devastated by war, two nuclear bombs and years of totalitarian control, the Japanese hunger for creation and expression was insatiable. In the immediate post-war years, Japanese photography magazines resumed publication: *Camera*, *Asahi Camera* and later *Photo Art*, *Nippon Camera* & *Camera Mainichi* followed. In ruins, facing massive reconstruction and living under an occupying force, ideas of identity, nation and Japan's future were all at the forefront of the discussion:

Perhaps more than any other, Japanese photography has consistently engaged with social and political realities, seeking new ways to contribute to modern Japan's search for identity.

Feustel (2007)

*Shashin*, the Japanese word for photography, translates literally as ‘truth copy’ and in many ways this word epitomises post-World War II Japanese photography. In the immediate post-war years, the need to bear witness to the destruction caused by the atomic bombs was of paramount importance. It was the role of photography and the photographer to capture the reality of the situation and present it to the viewer. The Japanese people longed for an ‘objective’ view after years of wartime propaganda (Feustel 2007). A photo-realist movement emerged, led by Ken Domon and based around the post-war magazine *Camera*. Domon believed in a “direct linkage between camera and subject” and the “absolutely pure snapshot, absolutely un-staged.” This realism struck a chord because photographers felt the need to record the hardships they witnessed. Domon's desire “to grasp the subject directly without subjective interpretation” combined with his disdain for the “cheapness of the staged photographs amateurs commonly produced” left little room for development. He remained committed to his vision of ‘photo-realism’, which although it was an important developmental stage in Japan's post-war history, its stringent approach and inflexibility left no room for it to grow and develop further (Feustel 2007). Instead, a more personal, interpretive and conceptual style began to emerge. The exploration of new documentary approaches in Japanese society and social contradictions developed in the sixties, and was fueled by a heightened political awareness. The ‘Image Generation’ emphasised the role of the photographer. That role was as an active participant, constructing and creating images to tell their story, in contrast to the straightforward approach of photo-realism. This new direction paved the way for photographers such as Moriyama Daido and Araki Nobuyoshi, who recorded aspects of their personal lives as a means of exploring broader ideas.





Figure 7: Kozka, *Four Views and One Robot* (after Shoji Ueda) (2008)

The late fifties saw a brief but important influence on the subjective photography movement (*shukanshugi shashin*), inspired by the German *Subjektive Fotografie*. It focused on experimental tendencies inherited from the 1930s and avant-garde schools. However, unlike the European approach, which was quite holistic and a feature of the Japanese subjective photography movement, it positioned itself in direct opposition to Domon Ken and other photo-realists. One participant of the Japan Subjective Photography League's 1956 exhibition was Ueda Shoji (Tucker 2003).

His style was distinctive in that it was controlled and choreographed and his images were often complex and staged. The compositions and interactions of his characters were integral to telling a story. As can be seen in the examples below, the position of the characters, their expressions – whether staring blankly ahead or engaging with the camera – are all controlled by Ueda Shoji, as the director.

In my piece, *Four Views and One Robot* (after Ueda Shoji) (2008) I draw directly from his *Four Views of a Girl* (1949) and *Papa, Mama and the Children* (1950). As with Ueda Shoji, each character in my constructed world is there for a reason, their poses and expressions predetermined, their props chosen rather than left to chance. Where Ueda Shoji used the blank canvas of the Tottori sand dunes, I use a digital canvas.



Figure 7a: Shoji Ueda, *Four Views of a Girl* (1949)



Figure 8: Kozka, *Sketch idea for Train* (2006)



Figure 9: Kozka, Train (2007)

**Manga**

*Manga is virtual.*

*Manga is sentiment.*

*Manga is resistance.*

*Manga is bizarre.*

*Manga is pathos.*

*Manga is destruction.*

*Manga is arrogance.*

*Manga is love.*

*Manga is kitsch.*

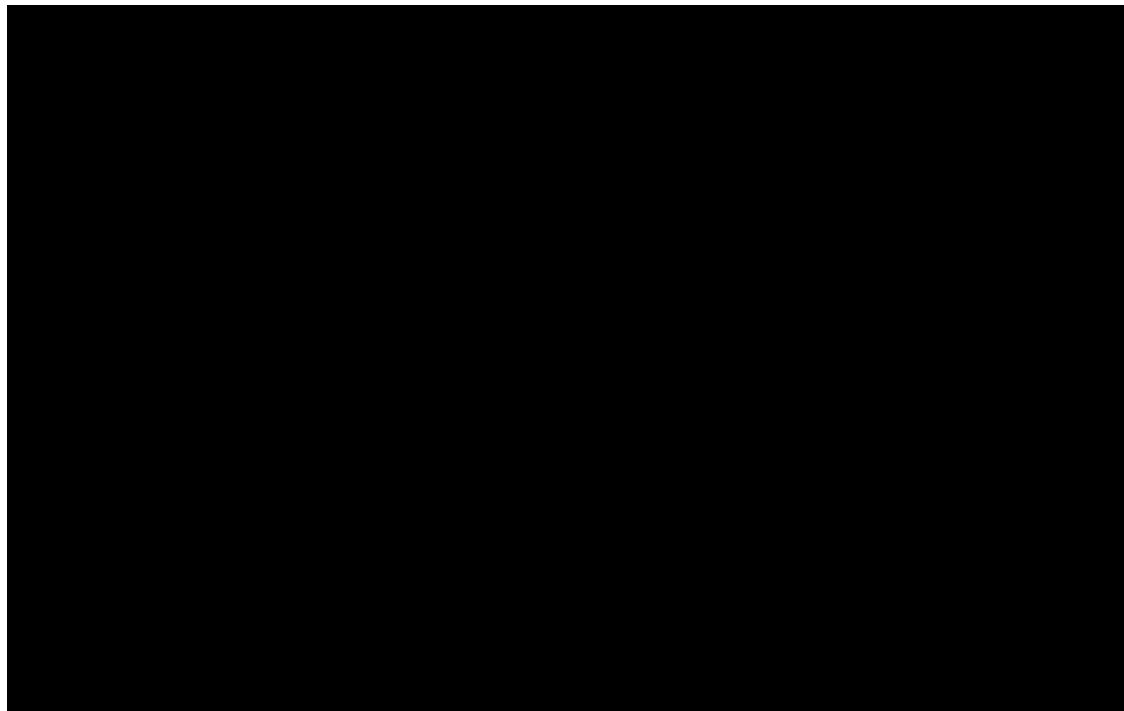
*Manga is sense of wonder.*

*Manga is...*

*There is no conclusion yet.*

*Tezuka Boku Wa Manga-ka (I am a Manga Writer), Tezuka (1969)*

While much of the photographic practice in post-war Japan centred on ideas of identity, bearing witness to the past, documenting the 'Japanese economic miracle' and the associated political and social upheaval, it was the illustrators of Manga who cast their minds to the future. It must be noted that Manga is by no means a post-war development. Satirical and humorous genre sketches and prints can be traced back as far as the twelfth century in Japan, an example of this is Toba Sojo, an eleventh century painter-priest with a whimsical sense of humour (Bowie 1960). The early nineteenth century artist Hokusai was particularly skilled in producing this kind of work. Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) His sketches include landscapes, flora and fauna, everyday life and the supernatural. The first book of Hokusai's Manga, sketches or caricatures that influenced the modern form of comics known by the same name was published in 1814. Although the images are not connected to each other and the narratives are not intended to flow from one to the next, I view these as an early form of Manga.



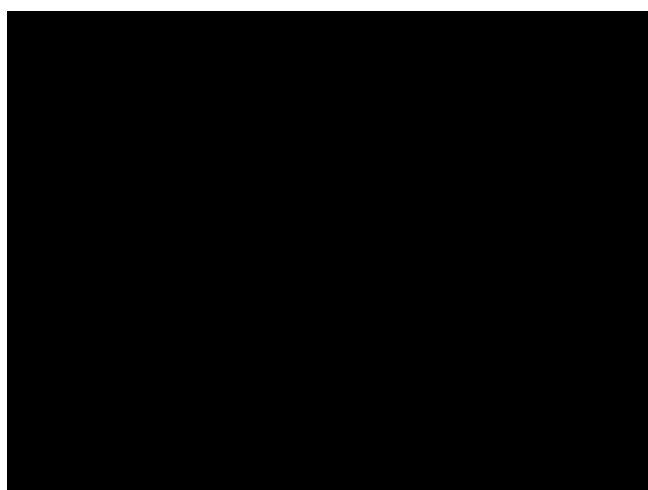
*Figure 10: Toba Sojo, Chouj Jinbutsu Giga (part) Frog and Rabbit play Sumo (approx. 1140)*

It is the modern Manga of post-war, post-atomic bomb Japan that is most relevant to my project. Manga flourished in the post-war period because, as with photography, it had been strictly controlled by the government during the war as part of a crackdown on radical art forms. During this period the once independent cartooning groups were replaced by government -sponsored groups using Manga as propaganda. Sheri Le, researcher and writer on Manga, points out that:

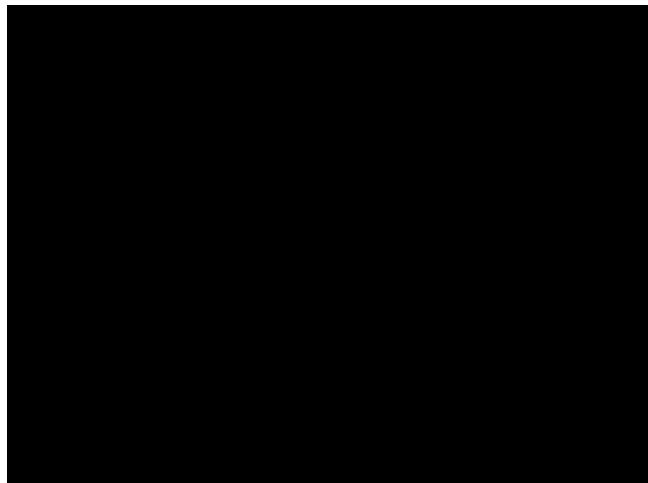
Throughout WW II, Manga began to stagnate. The scarcity of supplies (especially paper), a low demand for cartoons, and the heavy nationalisation push by the government caused Manga to languish until the end of the war.

Le (2002)

The end of the war brought about a new era. Though traditional hardback comic books proved too expensive to produce, the emergence of the 'Red Book' (named for their red covers) began to appear around 1947. These were cheap to produce and easy to distribute and carry. Osamu Tezuka, one of the most influential Manga artists emerged from this period. He was prolific between 1946 and 1953 and produced thirty-seven Manga titles. But it was his 1947 adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic *Treasure Island*, named *Shintakarajima (New Treasure Island)* that revolutionised Manga. Prior to World War II, Manga was simple; with short stories and four or less image boxes to a page. Tezuka established the dynamic page division, boxes, angles and visual 'sound effects' that we now identify so readily with Manga (Brophy 2006). I have clearly taken Tezuka's dynamic approach to layout in the creation of my work, so that it most obviously references Manga.



*Figure 11: Pre World War II Manga*



*Figure 12: Wartime propaganda Manga*

As Sheri Le points out, "Tezuka had introduced a type of sequential picture book into his Manga that allowed the reader to view each frame as if it were the lens of a camera." He used close ups, wide shots, jumps and 'camera' angles in his illustrations to build the tension and tell the story. His narratives flowed in a more cinematic style. Go Tchiei (1998), in *Characteristics of Japanese Manga* describes a scene in *New Treasure Island*, where one of the characters arrives at the wharf:

In Manga prior to this, one or two frames would have sufficed to convey the whole scene. But Tezuka spent eight of the 180 pages of this work to render this scene of a car arriving at a wharf. And the depiction is different from anything Manga readers had seen before. From the close-up of the boy's face the perspective pans to the driver's seat of the car and the gradual zoom-in of the car racing along the seaside road is almost as if the artist had simply pasted successive frames from a film onto the page. This latter technique was highly cinematic and led to the characterisation of this Manga as like a film.

Go Tchiei (1998)

It is this same idea of a cinematic-style narrative that I have adopted in my work. I look for visual ways of describing a scene through multiple images of differing sizes, shapes and positions on the page. Tezuka produced stories that were unfolding, but it has been my intention to describe a single instant from multiple points or views. It is a subtle but important difference; while I am borrowing from the aesthetic of Manga and its organisational approach to placing and positioning images, I am not attempting to create a photographic version of it. I am interested in capturing 'the moment' but I do not want to tell the whole story. Rather, I hope to retain the ambiguity of any given moment. My choice of subject matter is also an important consideration. As I mentioned earlier, the Japanese photographic tradition was very interested in documenting the 'now', whereas I align myself with the visions and possibilities of the future that Manga projects and attempts to illustrate.

Tezuka's work is very instructive when looking to visions of the future. His creation, *Astro Boy* (Tezuka 1951), is the story of a robot boy living in a time where humans and robots co-exist. While the storylines appear simplistic on the surface, the background story reflects the potent underlying themes of prejudice, fear of the future and struggles with identity, which are far from shallow. Although not a super hero, one cannot help but draw similarities between *Astro Boy's* story and the character of David in Stephen Spielberg's 2001 film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*. *Astro Boy* was created by Doctor Tenma to replace his son Tobio, who died in a car accident. David is a robot child, given to a couple whose birth child is in suspended animation awaiting a cure for a rare disease. In both cases, the 'child figures' are cast adrift and in both stories the idea of the complex relationships between human emotions and robotics are tackled. For example, in *A.I.*, David's 'imprinting protocol' irreversibly causes him to feel love for his mother. In 2001, the idea of artificial intelligence being able to develop into real human emotion might seem plausible, that Tezuka explored this idea in 1951 is testament to his futuristic vision.

Eugene Spafford convincingly argues the notion that a computer code can evolve to manifest certain 'lifelike' qualities in his pivotal paper *Computer Viruses as Artificial Life* (Spafford 1994). He comments in the abstract of the paper "...only recently have some scientists begun to ask if computer viruses are not a form of artificial life – a self-replicating organism." He goes on to facetiously suggest, "...that if computer viruses evolve into something with artificial consciousness this might provide a doctrine of 'original sin' for their theology." (Spafford 1994). Although Spafford's

discussion centres on the 'sinister' evolution of viruses, this principle of evolution is equally applicable to all computer code. In my series, *Machine Art* (2008), I make the leap that as computers, code and machines evolve, they will develop a desire to represent their own existence through art.

In my work, *Machine Art* I endeavour to predict the sorts of art pieces that machines might theoretically want to make. I have chosen to use QR Code to explore my vision of a machine's representation of art. QR Code relies on a visual pattern and transmits specific information. In my work *Machine Art: Shibuya Station, High Speed Constructor, Clear Blue Sky Day*, location, subject matter and climatic conditions are represented by each distinct pattern.



Figure 13: Kozka, *Machine Art: Shibuya Station, High Speed Constructor, Clear Blue Sky Day* (2009)

In my work *Tamagotchi Girlfriend*, a similar idea is explored; the idea of a relationship with someone or something that is not real. *Tamagotchi Girlfriend* comes from the idea of an interaction or relationship with artificially intelligent agents or software, the idea is also drawn from two other phenomena in Japan. There is the increasing obsession with life-size Japanese sex dolls, usually with the appearance of Manga-style characters; and Otaku, tech-head nerds obsessed with Manga, anime and cosplay.

The Tamagotchi is a small, simple egg-shaped electronic device with a built-in LCD that is programmed to be a pet. As its owner, you are required to feed it, play with it, clean up its waste and network it with other Tamagotchi. If it is not 'cared' for, it does not survive. Unlike other 'games' that rely on either an ongoing narrative or progression through a series of levels, it is the maintenance of the Tamagotchi that draws the owner back to it. As simple as it is, this electronic device creates a sense of its own existence by appealing to the human desire to nurture a quasi-real relationship. In *Tamagotchi Girlfriend*, I expand on this idea. The device is no longer a kid's toy, but an artificially intelligent agent, programmed with the ability to interact and learn from past interactions. Though in its infancy, this technology already exists. One of the most practical implementations is in *iTunes*. When "Genius" is launched in *iTunes*, it gathers information from your music database, looks at what is in your library, what you have recently played, how often, and what you have recently downloaded. From that it generates play lists and recommends songs and artists. With this information programmed into an artificial intelligent agent, for example my *Tamagotchi Girlfriend*, it would not be difficult to create an 'interaction' or conversation between the A.I. and a person about the sorts of music they like. It develops a 'relationship' in a similar, but more advanced and complex way than the traditional Tamagotchi.

### **Anime and Dystopian Futurescapes**

Visions of the future presented in Manga are all the more evident in anime. This is a broad term that covers all aspects of animation, but as Jasper Sharp explains in his essay *Futurescape*:

...it has come to encompass one particular salient trend within anime. Mainly set in dystopian future environments, this particular strain of "Japanimation" is distinguished stylistically by detailed and precisely drawn characters and back drops rather than the softer, more simplified designs of traditional cartoon.

Sharp (2007)

It is this dark, dystopian view of the future I have chosen to embrace in my work. In some ways I feel it was chosen for me; not by any one person, entity or single event, but by the city itself. Jasper Sharp describes Tokyo as a 'muse' to film-makers, anime and Manga artists alike. This is something I can very much relate to and I feel that a sense of the futuristic city resonates through my work.

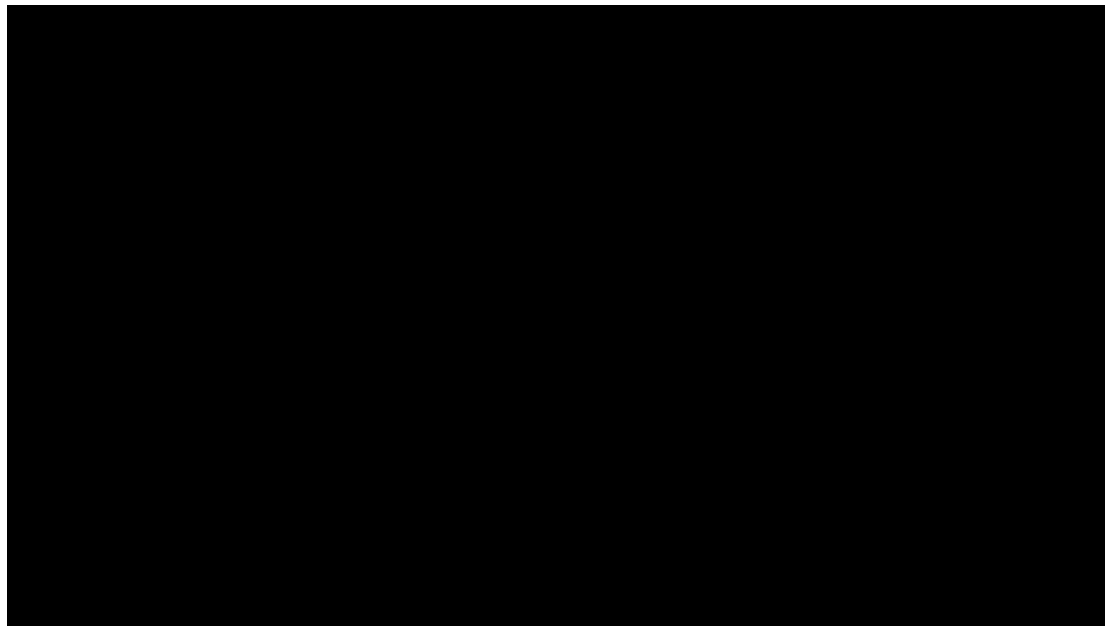


Figure 14: Scene from the opening titles of Ohsii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)

Dystopian views of the future are not new, nor are they particular to Japan. George Orwell's *1984* (1949), Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1934) are all different Western dystopic visions. They also share a common thread; they offer the promise of utopia, whether it's a worker's utopia or a life free of technology, though the reality is, of course, often far from utopian. In many ways Tokyo embodies this; its development as a city is very different from that of its counterparts around the world, which offers some insight into how the city is perceived and how it has achieved its 'futuristic' status.

Twice in the last century, Tokyo was all but totally destroyed. First, in 1923 by the Kanto earthquake and then by American fire bombing raids in 1945. Both times it has been rebuilt. While little survived these events, it is interesting that the basic street layout has not changed since the Edo period. The combination of rapid rebuilding and post World War II economic expansion with a lack of available space led to an expansion upwards and downwards: Tokyo Station, for example, goes some seven stories down. The overall layout of Tokyo is also very different from other major cities: it has no centre. Looking at a map of Tokyo, all major areas form a circle and the centre is of little significance. The city appears more like a collection of suburbs or villages connected by the high-speed trains and overpasses, as Charlie Stross describes in the opening quote. This layout is, I believe, significant in the idea that Tokyo is a blueprint of a dystopian future city. Roland Barthes describes the layout of Los Angeles in *Empire of Signs*:

Quadrangular, reticulated cities are said to produce a profound uneasiness: they offend our synthetic sentiments of the City, which requires that any urban space has a centre to go to, to return from...

Barthes (1970)

I believe that this same description could be applied to Tokyo. The rapid development; the need to embrace technology for the city to grow, a booming 'bubble economy' and a city layout that produces "...a profound uneasiness" (Barthes 1970), these are the ingredients that make Tokyo the archetypal, modern mega-metropolis which inspires not only Japanese anime and Manga artists but also Western writers, film-makers and artists.

City design and building regulations alone do not earn Tokyo the futuristic, dystopian mantle. One must also look at the idea of the 'corporation'. Looking at many contemporary dystopian visions of the future, we see that power has shifted away from governments and into the hands of controlling and usually slightly amoral, if not completely evil, corporations. Although Japan cannot lay claim to this idea entirely, the similarities between the zaibatsu and the notion of an 'evil, dominating corporation' of the future are unmistakable. Zaibatsu literally translates to 'financial cliques' (Watkins 2008). They were large family enterprises that held great influence over Japanese national and foreign policies. After World War II, the zaibatsu were 'officially' dissolved. However in reality, while the strength of the zaibatsu may have diminished, their place and power in the psyche of the people remained firmly entrenched (Morikawa 1992). This can be seen in much of futuristic-based anime's battles between rival corporations. This corporate power and rivalry is also explored in Western science fiction, such as in the novels of William Gibson and Philip K. Dick's short story *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) which was later adapted into the film *Blade Runner* (Scott 1982).

While this fascination with the way in which power operates within Japanese society provides insight into how a dystopian view of the future has developed, it still does not adequately explain our attraction to it. In many ways these dystopian views are warnings, in much the same way children's

nursery rhymes are warnings. However, there *is* something undeniably enticing about Ridley Scott's Los Angeles of 2019 in *Blade Runner* and *Akira*'s post-apocalyptic Tokyo of the same era: am I viewing these worlds through the eyes of an *otaku* and being seduced by the aesthetic trappings of the future?

### ***Kawaii***

No discussion of dystopian Tokyo would be complete without looking at its antidote: *Kawaii*, which refers to childlike cuteness. This is epitomised by *Hello Kitty*, *Pikachu* (a *Pokémon* character) and the various official mascots of the Police, Fire Brigade and each of Japan's forty-seven prefectures. "Tomoyuki Sugiyama, author of *Cool Japan*, believes that 'cuteness' is rooted in Japan's harmony-loving culture" (Kageyama 2006).

Nobuyoshi Kurita, a sociology professor at Musashi University in Tokyo, has stated that "cute" is a "magic term" that encompasses everything that is "acceptable and desirable." (Kurita 2006).

The concept of *kawaii* is not new, it can be seen in the eleventh century scrolls of Toba Sojo, which depict cute, playful characters frolicking in nature. The modern understanding of *kawaii* dates from the seventies and coincides with the beginning of the cute handwriting craze and childish fashion. Interestingly, for a trend that started as a predominantly female teen/tween subculture, it has been absorbed seamlessly into the mainstream. For example, the Tokyo Metropolitan Fire department's mascot, Kyuta is an oversized childlike character wearing a baby blue helmet and a bright red leotard. As Sharon Kinsella explains in her paper 'Cuties in Japan': "The industrial, impure or masculine nature of some of the objects decorated in fancy style can produce incongruous images, such as the almost transvestite like character of baby pink road diggers or adult gambling machines called My Poochy and Fairies. But there has been no mischievous conspiracy of camp designers behind these articles. Despite appearances to the contrary there was no strong sense of kitsch attached to cute." *Kawaii* is particular to Japan, and is not replicated in the West at all. While there are many possible reasons for Japan's attraction to *kawaii*, as Sugiyama and Kurita have pointed out, it may be seen as some sort of antidote to the hectic, huge, fast-paced, built-up modernity that is Japan.

### ***Contemporary Japanese Photography & Computer Generated Images***

Manga and anime both provide insightful and visually detailed visions of the future. Due to the fact that they are both essentially drawn either by hand or by the use of Computer Generated Imagery (CGI), their creators have the freedom to render worlds and characters as they please, and their rendering is not limited by physical surrounds, casts, props or clothes. Locations need not be sourced or built and their props do not need to be made. In CGI animation, all props, characters and buildings need to be 'built' as models within the CGI environment. This is not a physical environment, it is constructed virtually within a range of CGI software programmes. It is also worth noting that while, for example, a model of a gun may need to be made for any given character, that same gun could be 'copied and pasted' into the hands of a ten thousand-strong CGI army. In photography or film, this would often require the physical creation of ten thousand guns. The creators are limited purely by imagination, skill and resources. Contemporary photographers on the other hand, can only allude to their futuristic visions. The future is implied or hinted at. Their images are mainly set in contemporary spaces, supplemented by costume; *Subway* by Mariko Mori, (1994), or with digital effects by Julie (2006), or with the use of illustrative overlays in the work of Mi-Zo Minori and Zoren Gold. Mariko Mori's *Wave UFO* (2003), is an exception to this.

While stylistically and visually quite different, these contemporary photographers all share a common thread. Their imagery, as critic Timothy R. Gleason (2008) puts it, is dependent on a relationship with the future. While he attributes this mainly to the work of Mori and Julie, it is equally true of the other contemporary Japanese photographers who have influenced my work.

The work of Mi-Zo Minori and Zoren Gold, a German/Japanese duo, is primarily focused on commercial fashion clients. However, they are starting to be recognised as artists in their own right, as evidenced in their inclusion in *Tokyo Life – Art & Design* (Luna 2007), and more recently when they were invited to be part of the *NikeShow* Studio Exhibition at the Art/Basel 2008. While their work captures what Ian Luna (Luna 2007) describes as "...the multi-coloured carnival of present day Tokyo", their images evoke a digitised and pixelated future. Their choice of location and composition

hints at the anime worlds of *Akira* (Otomo 1988) and Masamune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell* (1989). In Mi-Zo Minori and Zoren Gold's untitled image, we can see a building on a very typical Tokyo street. In the window is the image of a female, and there is a subtle overlay which is strangely organic and yet mechanical, alluding to some sort of cyborg-esque implants, vaguely reminiscent of Borg drone '7 of 9' from the *Star Trek: Voyager* series (1995). This image is clearly a projection of the future achieved with minimal intervention from the artist. However it must be understood that the image relies on a visual vocabulary created by countless Manga, anime and science fiction practitioners over several decades. It also relies on the recognition of Tokyo and the common understanding that there is something about Tokyo that 'is' the future.

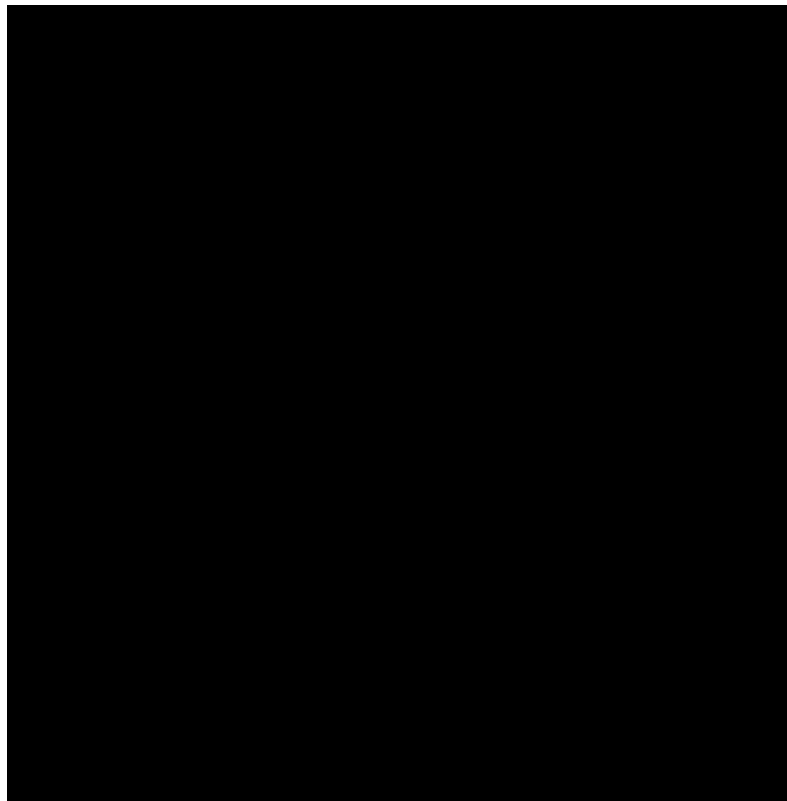


Figure 15: Mi-Zo Minori and Zoren Gold, *Untitled* (date unknown)

As a graphic designer, pop singer and photographer, 'Julie' is at the centre of the Japanese popular culture scene. Julie's images are almost documentary in style. The initial impression is that they are not constructed or contrived, yet on closer inspection, this is not the case. Timothy R. Gleason (2008) points out that "...the range of the photographs in *Samurai Girl* dispels the notion the images are documentary because some are obviously homages to popular culture." Julie's vision of the future is not as clear or direct as some of the other artists discussed, nor does it attempt to predict the future, instead her images are more of a journey than a statement. Her subject matter is otaku, specifically female otaku, and as Francesco Fondi, editor of *Otaku* magazine, explains, she is "tracing out psychogeographic maps of the imagination of a generation of young Japanese whose lives are absorbed in video games, cartoons and the wired" Fondi (2006).

Julie's work is a blend of fantasy, kawaii and Manga. Her all-female cast are presented as strong and independent, even when depicted as maids or other overly sexualised Manga characters. Gleason explains; "Julie adopts the sexualised gaze like some racial and ethnic groups adopt slurs made towards them to nullify their meaning", Gleason (2008). In two images, a young girl is presented topless wearing fishnet stockings and a maid's apron. In one image she looks over her shoulder at the camera, in the other, she adopts a childlike pose, with one finger in her mouth. In both images though, the girl is the size of Godzilla, dwarfing the buildings and streetscapes. In another futuristic image, we see two *Sailor Moon* girls dispassionately engaged in battle, like anime figurines. Both float in the sky above the earth in a fantasy space equipped with robotic feet or boots and armed with rocket launchers and shields. It is like some sort of otaku dream.





*Figure 16: Julie, Untitled (2000)*

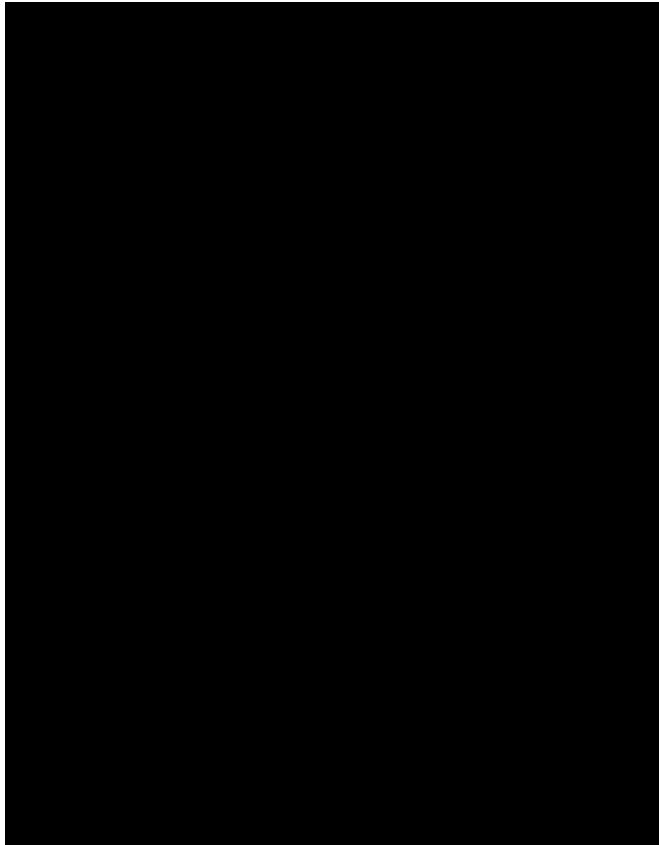
Andrew Zolli's (2003) description of Mariko Mori is insightful, if a little sensationalist. "She's the aesthetic lovechild of William Gibson, Cindy Sherman, and the *Ghost in the Shell*." As Gleason writes, Mori challenges social norms by creating a visual criticism. The context in which this criticism is based is science fiction and shares a visual language and aesthetic with the likes of William Gibson and Masamune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell* (1989).

In Mori's work *Subway* (1994), she appears in a Tokyo subway carriage. The carriage is not new or particularly modern, and dressed in a shiny silver space suit, Mori's appearance contrasts with her surroundings. She looks over her shoulder at some businessmen who pay her no attention. She presses some buttons on a touch pad on her sleeve. To the left other passengers are also appear oblivious to her, "...they prefer to avoid involvement through consumption of more staid media (like newspapers or adverts)" (Haye 1995).

In *Come Play with Me* (1994), Mori, a cybernetic hybrid human stands at the front of an electronics store. She is next to a Sega video game, which looks rather antiquated in contrast with her hi-tech appearance. The scene is cheap, with the surrounding signs loudly displaying their tawdry prices in the neon-lit night. One wonders, if is Mori a product for sale, a more advanced Sega or is she waiting for someone? The image is quite isolating; she is alone, she looks to passers-by but is paid no more attention than the Sega game. This work inspired, and directly relates to my piece, *Tamagotchi Girlfriend*, mentioned previously.



*Figure 17: Julie, Untitled (2000)*



*Figure 18: Julie, Untitled (2000)*

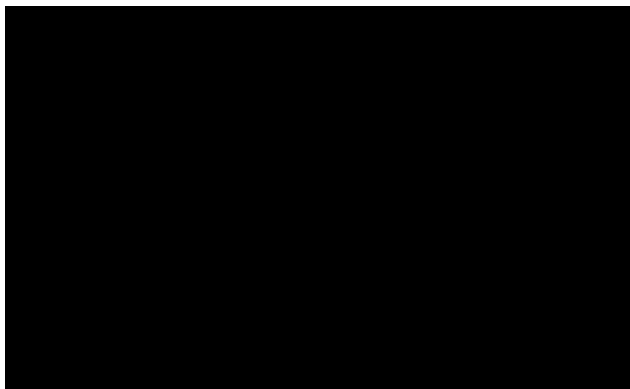
Similarly in *Red Light*, Mori positions herself in a busy Tokyo street brightly lit with signs. Once again she looks futuristic though distinctly human and isolated, not engaged with anyone. Mori uses a long exposure so that the bustling crowds who fill the area appear more like ghosts accentuating the disconnection between the figure and the people on the street.

While this earlier work seems to warn us of the potential isolation the future and technology may bring, her later work takes a more positive view of the future. For example, *Last Departure* (1996) and the video *Miko no Inori (The Shaman-Girl's Prayer)* (1996):

What I am really trying to do is point out where technology should go in the future, which I think is to coexist with nature.

The problem is that sometimes we become slaves to technology. Instead of using technology, it uses you!

Mori (1999)



*Figure 19: Mariko Mori, Last Departure (1996)*

Mori's 2003 project *Wave UFO* is her most utopian view of the future to date. It fuses real-time computer graphics, brainwave technology, sound, and architectural engineering to create a dynamic interactive experience. Upon entering the 'UFO', the viewer or participant is fitted with electrodes to read brainwaves. Information from the brain is transformed into visual imagery and projected onto the screen. The forms change shape and colour in response to three types of brainwaves. Alpha (blue) waves indicate wakeful relaxation; Beta (pink) waves indicate alertness or agitation; and Theta (yellow) waves indicate a dreamlike state. This piece has none of the foreboding pessimism of her earlier works and tends to underline her interest in blending consciousness and technology, real and artificial.

I believe that a synthetic world has its own reality and consciousness - it's what you experience, what you feel, what you dream. This is what I am really interested in...

Mori (1999)

## Contemporary Western Visions of Japan

While much of the work discussed throughout this exegesis has been produced by Japanese practitioners, the group I most identify with, through my birth and upbringing, is the Western practitioner looking in at Japan. In Philip K. Dick's short story *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), and Ridley Scott's adaptation, *Blade Runner* (1982), both artists use the aesthetics of a dystopian Japanese 'megatropolis' and the influence they see Japan having in the future, but they apply these to a Western futuristic location: Los Angeles, 2019. While there is no denying the aesthetic impact both Dick's story and Scott's film have had on my work, I wish to look specifically at more contemporary Western visions of Japan, and how the filter of Orientalism colours my vision. For this discussion, I have selected particular works and artists: Edward Zwick's *The Last Samurai* (2004), starring Tom Cruise and Ken Watanabe; Quentin Tarantino's 2003 film *Kill Bill Vol. 1*; Philip Kaufman's film adaptation of Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* (1993); and the illustrations of Melbourne artist Andrea Innocent (2009).

My decision to look at film adaptations rather than the original texts is two-fold. The analysis of images, in this case moving images, is more relevant to my investigation than an analysis of written narratives. The other reason is that the films I am looking at are mainstream blockbusters (or attempt to be so), and I feel that as such, they will more likely magnify and exemplify the Orientalist view of Japan they promote. (Some may find this arguable in the case of Philip Kaufman's *Rising Sun* (1993), due to changes he made in the adaptation.)

I will also look at the imagery used for the promotional posters of these films. The point of posters is to market to, and inspire, the potential audience, so they are often an interesting and revealing distillation of the story into one image. While these posters aim to use one powerful image to tell the story, they also manage (intentionally or not) to capture the clichés, misconceptions and stereotypes Westerners either see, or desire, when looking to the East. Edward Said (Said 1978). puts forward the argument that 'The Orient' is a construct by the West, for the West. Orientalism is a way of observing how the East is often portrayed as inferior, alien or exotic as opposed to the West. Admittedly, Said does not cite Japan in his definitions of the East, but his analysis is nonetheless pertinent to Japan and my study of it.

Philip Kaufman's film adaptation of Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* (1993) casts Sean Connery and Wesley Snipes in a master/apprentice type relationship reminiscent of the 1970s series *Kung Fu* (1972), in which Caine (or 'Grasshopper' ) (David Carradine) would receive pearls of Oriental wisdom from Master Po. In *Rising Sun*, an L.A. electronics firm negotiates a deal with a Japanese corporation based in America. When a woman is found murdered at a gala held in the Japanese offices, a racist lieutenant (Harvey Keitel) arrives on the scene to investigate, and is paired up with a Special Services liaison (Wesley Snipes) and an ex-patriate well-versed in Japanese culture (Sean Connery). Together, they embark on solving the murder.

Director Kaufman made several key changes to the novel's original storyline. Firstly, he made the killer a white lawyer (rather than Japanese), and he also changed the main Japanese character, Eddie Sakamura, from a self-centred nerd to a virile playboy, who, in a fatal martial-arts brawl with some henchmen, sacrifices his life to save the heroes. The film adheres to all the expected clichés. The Japanese are portrayed as sinister, non-communicative, cold, and only interested in their objectives, and only the doomed Eddie Sakamura breaks this mould. Said's description of how the Oriental is perceived perfectly fits this film (and novel); "The man is depicted as feminine, weak, yet strangely dangerous because he poses a threat to white, Western women" (Said 1978). A secondary story in the film is the relationship between Connery's character and the 'video expert', a beautiful, exotic and demure Japanese woman who has a slight deformity, and therefore a need to be rescued from Japanese culture where, according to the film, her deformity is totally unacceptable. Again, Said's description of how the Oriental female is often constructed in the West is apt; "The woman is both eager to be dominated and strikingly exotic" (Said 1978).

There are many variations on the same theme for *Rising Sun's* (1993) film poster, of which I have chosen two examples. They all depict the heroes coming out of the darkness; their expressions and the positioning of their heads vary between reassuring and determined. At the bottom of each of the images is the likeness of a rising sun, which ranges from realistic to totally graphic interpretations. The main difference is the inclusion or exclusion of the murdered victim. When included, her image is highly charged. Her skimpy black dress falls to the side exposing her slightly parted legs, her head rolls to the camera, eyes closed and mouth slightly open. Behind her is the rising sun, almost as if she is a sacrifice to it.

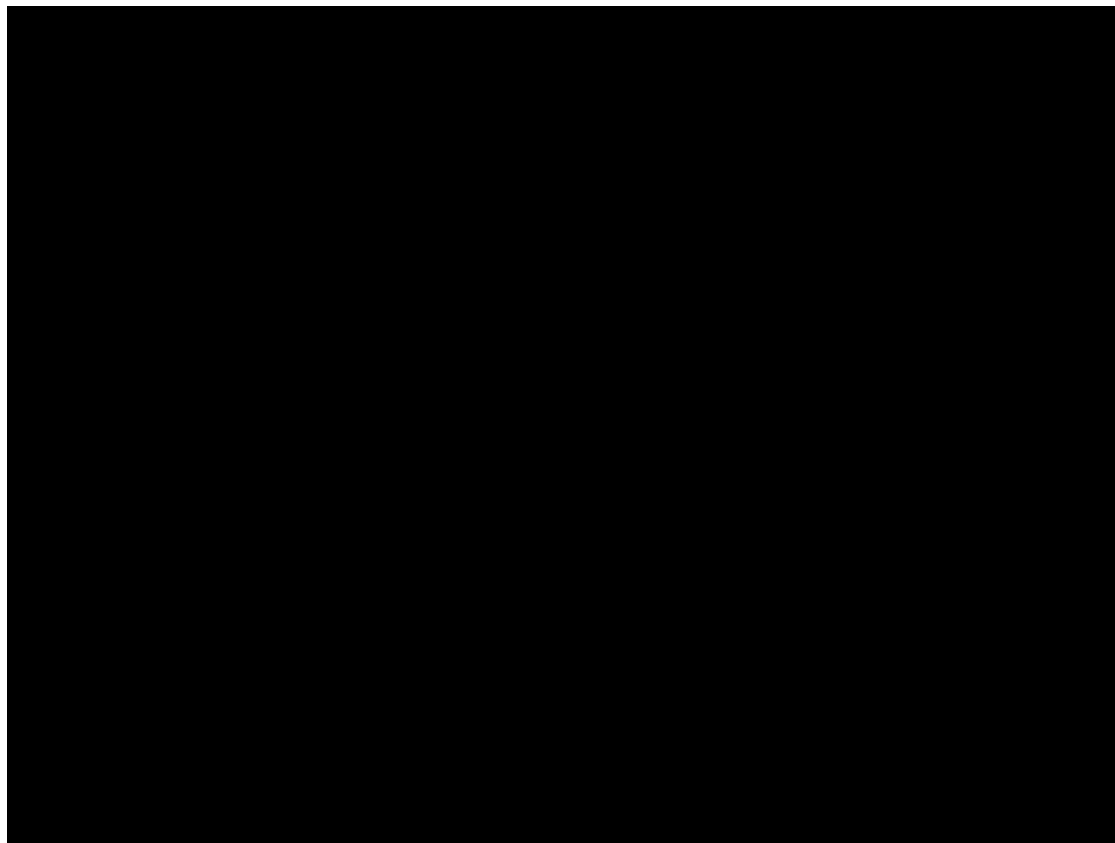


Figure 20: *Rising Sun* Film Posters (1993)

Edward Zwick's *The Last Samurai* (2004), starring Tom Cruise and Ken Watanabe is about a white man's journey into a foreign and initially impenetrable society. It is also about a nation's journey towards modernisation and a noble, yet doomed group's journey to extinction. The story revolves around American army captain Nathan Algren who is hired to train Japanese troops during the Meiji Restoration. In his first battle against the oppositional samurai, Algren is taken prisoner by Lord Katsumoto who gradually converts him to his cause. Although not historically accurate, the film depicts several major events in Japanese history. The main problem is that the film is centred around the arrogant idea that the West can somehow help the East re-engage with itself. As Motoko Rich asserts in his article 'Land Of the Rising Cliché' that:

...reservations about *The Last Samurai* began with reviews that castigated the movie for its stale portrayals of Japanese culture, as well as the patronizing narrative of a white man teaching the rapidly modernizing Japanese how to honor their past.

Motoko Rich (2004)

Motoko Rich also quotes Tom Long (2004), who says that "*The Last Samurai* pretends to honor a culture, but all it's really interested in is cheap sentiment, big fights and, above all, star worship." I think the point about star worship is worth noting, because the film *is* Tom Cruise and relies heavily on his cult status. The hero in the film becomes confused with the identity of the actor. This is most apparent in the film posters. In all the examples, Ken Watanabe doesn't even appear in the background. Also interesting is that in the final battle scenes, Tom wears the armour of the Samurai he killed when he was first caught; this armour just happens to be bright red, highlighting him distinctively as the hero throughout. The final scene from the film epitomises the arrogance of the West. In one of the most implausible scenes (the Emperor would never directly address a foreigner) the Emperor asks the Tom Cruise character about Katsumoto; "tell me how he died" and as he rises to his feet, tears welling in his eyes, he says "No, I'll tell you how he lived...". Voice over...cherry blossoms...he returns to the village and to his love interest. Yes, she is beautiful, exotic and demure.

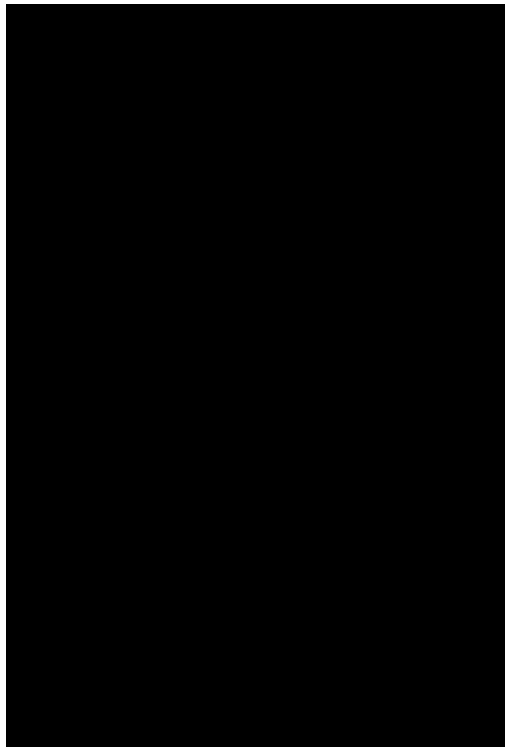


Figure 21: Last Samurai Film Poster (2004)

Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill Vol.1* (2003) seems to follow a different path from the last two films discussed. It is full of clichéd and stereotyped characters, more so than either of the other two films. However, it works because it is a deliberate strategy on Tarantino's behalf to reference stereotypes and past films. Inspired by the Japanese exploitation film culture of the '70s, he references many Japanese films, among them Toshiya Fujita's *Lady Snowblood* (1973), Hideo Tanaka's *Sukeban Deka* (1987), and Kazuo Mori's *Zatoichi* (1962). This is what sets this film apart from the others. It is made up of studio-based cinematography, overly stylised sets, and airlines that allow Samurai swords as 'carry on luggage', all of which reassures us that we are not in the real world, rather, that we are watching a fictional construct. This makes Tarantino's caricatures such as 'Gogo', the super hot, ball-and-chain-wielding, school-girl uniform (complete with plaid skirt, knee-high white socks and blue blazer) wearing assassin much more palatable than Tom Cruise's smug and overly sentimental hero in *The Last Samurai*. It is also interesting that Tarantino shies away from stereotyping the 'demure Asian girl'. Most of the females in the film are assassins, and some were inspired by classic Japanese films. Meiko Kaji from *Lady Snowblood* was a strong influence. As Rikke Schubart explains,

As I was going through stills from Kaji's films at the research library in the National Film Center in Kyobashi, Tokyo, in the summer of 2004 (as part of my research for a book on female heroes) it struck me how the studios always chose to focus on her big eyes, the long, straight black hair, and her body as a brooding figure. Often holding a weapon - a knife, piece of glass, a rifle, a samurai sword - and looking away from the action and directly into the camera and the eyes of the audience. She did not smile in any of the stills but remained a lonely existence immersed in darkness. She resembled a female version of Clint Eastwood's character The Man With No Name in Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns.

Schubart (2005)

Tightly cropped images of strong, focused women dominate many of the intense scenes in *Kill Bill*. As with the images of Meiko Kaji, Tarantino draws attention to the eyes and powerful stance of the female. In one scene, Uma Thurman's character 'The Bride' confronts Gogo. As schoolgirl Gogo engages with Thurman's character, she does the expected 'hand over the mouth giggle', but retains a focused gaze and strong stance at all times. It appears that Tarantino understands that he is an outsider looking in. It is this awareness, combined with the fact he makes no claims to reality, which insulates him from some of the criticisms of Orientalism. This is something I attempt to embody in my work.

Melbourne artist Andrea Innocent explains her illustrative artistic practice as "...an ongoing exploration, in a contemporary context, (of aspects) of Japanese popular culture from an Australian perspective" (Innocent 2009). Her practice is therefore something I can draw greater comparisons with, at least insofar as we are both contemporary practising artists, both of Western origin, and unlike some of the earlier examples, less constrained by commercial interests. In all the cases presented so far, the films would have gone through rigorous studio, marketing and focus groups processes before release. These influences differ to my experience of producing work, and I would imagine Andrea Innocent's experience would be similarly unconstrained.

Innocent's detailed digital illustrations tell stories of the bizarre and quirky. The themes she tackles range from investigations into the cult of otaku to traditional Japanese folk tales. She uses symbolism throughout, combining contemporary art and socio-political comment with an understanding of more traditional Japanese works, as I do in my work. She borrows aesthetically, and, to a lesser extent, thematically from the traditions of ukiyo-e, Manga and subsequent contemporary styles such as *Superflat*, *Steampunk* and *Neo-Nihonga*. Whereas my work looks at the present and extrapolates it out to encompass dreams and fantasies of an imagined future, Innocent's work is topical and tends to reflect on current news stories and narratives found within a range of media, such as Manga, print news, television and online. In her most recent exhibition, *Alone but not lonely*, she looks primarily at the work of the otaku and other social fringe dwellers. In some cases, she looks at murders. In *'Love, Thieves and Fear Make Ghosts: old tales and new forms of Japanese ghosts'*, Innocent explores traditional ghost stories and other aspects of Japanese folklore in a contemporary context (Innocent 2009).

In *Nevada Tan*, Innocent explores the shocking story of a pre-teen a killer who murdered her fellow student, Satomi Mitarai, in an empty classroom during their lunch break. Both girls attended Okubo Elementary School in Sasebo, a port city in north-west Kyushu, Japan. Satomi Mitarai was twelve, and her killer was eleven. The child killer was nicknamed Nevada Tan due to her appearance in a photograph wearing a black sweatshirt with the word *NEVADA* across the chest in white, apparently from the University of Nevada. Her real identity was protected under Japanese law. Innocent's portrayal of this subject, while initially looking almost cute, is on closer inspection more shocking (though not as shocking as the reality of the story). The blood-filled eye sockets, the red, possibly severed hand to the left of the image and the dead girl's floating spirit all illustrate the horror of the story. The spirit of the girl is connected to a USB cable, which I find interesting on several levels. Firstly, government psychologists said Nevada Tan exhibited a difficulty in relating to others due to inadequate socialisation, which very much relates to the consistent theme of gadget-obsessed otaku in Innocent's work. Secondly, in the aftermath of the killing, internet surfers discovered the killer's home page:

Based on information contained there, we know her birthday (November 21, 1992), her blood type (A), and her favorite sport (basketball). A diary was fairly dark, reflecting an interest in the occult, the urban legend of a "red room" - a Ring-like killer internet site – and particularly creepily, the children-as-killers movie and book *Battle Royale*.

Innocent (2009)

The importance of this child's digital, rather than 'real' connection to the world is paramount. This is true from both the killer's perspective and from that of the public in understanding what occurred. Innocent understands and illustrates this tension in her work.

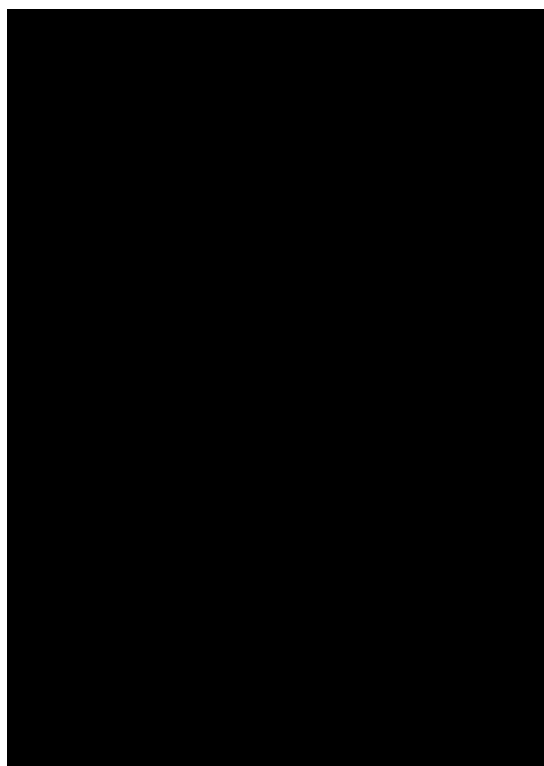


Figure 22: Innocent, *Nevada Tan* (2008)

In looking at Innocent's work, I hope to gain some more insight into how a Westerner sees Japan. Unlike the films *The Last Samurai* and *Rising Sun*, which are loaded with clichés, sentimentality and Western arrogance, Innocent's work appears, on the surface, free of a 'prescribed' way of seeing.

While her work doesn't attempt to pass judgement, ridicule or over-sensationalise (as Tarantino does), her choice of subject matter is of interest. To quote from her most recent exhibition catalogue, *Alone but not lonely*:

The protagonists in her work were either obsessed otaku, young murderers or lost and seemingly vulnerable children. This exhibition brings together a collection of works that all express the stories of a generation raised by virtual wolves. Wild, fearless and chibified children, a global expanse of souls facing each other through a glowing screen and feeding their knowledge from a soup flavoured by Wikipedia and Google but with very little context for a base.

Innocent (2009)

As a Western artist looking in at Japan, Innocent's choice is to explore the fringes of society; the things we find hard to comprehend, the weird and strange. They are the things that still seem strange and 'other', even in a post-Columbine massacre world. In his book, *And So Forth*, Robert Dessaix discusses Edward Said's notions of Orientalism in relation to his own work. This point has great resonance for me:

...Edward Said wonders if there could be a way of knowing the Orient from a libertarian, non-repressive, non-manipulative perspective. I don't see why it should be out of the question, especially for an Australian. I suspect there are ways of travelling and writing which, while Orientalist in some grand sense, need not cover us in shame.

Dessaix (1994)

It is difficult to defend the Orientalist view presented in films like *Rising Sun* and *The Last Samurai* (2004), as both of these films try to capitalise and exploit, drawing on negative views of Japan and old fears. However, I think the art of Tarantino and Innocent come from quite different mindsets, perhaps more in line with what Dessaix describes above. We must acknowledge that we, as Western artists, cannot see Japan as it appears to itself. We interpret, explore, interrogate and try to understand, but always through a filter. We are drawn to Japan because of what we don't understand, we are drawn to exactly what Said calls the 'other'. Innocent's obsession with otaku, murders and fringe dwellers; Tarantino's super-stylised, comic book reality; Charlie Stross's passion for a mechanised, always-on, *Blade Runner-esque* dystopian paradise are all, as Dessaix (1994) explains, "Orientalist in some grand sense". However, none of these artists attempt to control or demonise Japan, but instead they try to understand, accept, inform and entertain.

## Conclusion

As a Western artist, Japan presents itself to me as a futuristic ideal, made up of technological advancements which make one's life easier, more comfortable, and more entertaining. As Stross (2007) commented, "they've got it and they're living in it, damn them." When I peer in on Japan as an outsider, I marvel at the abundance of technologies and the rate at which these technologies are evolving.

However, as an outsider of the culture, I will only ever be able to interpret, explore and interrogate at a superficial level because of the filtered vision an outsider experiences, due to the lack of comprehensive historical and cultural knowledge. To me, Japan is what Said calls the 'other'. My views can also be described as an Orientalist perception, imitation or depiction of Japan.

Through popular culture platforms such as cinema and comic books, the superficiality of cultural knowledge is played upon and manipulated. As previously mentioned, Westerner Tarantino is heavily influenced by Japanese comic books in his film *Kill Bill* and he utilises a marvelously stylised comic-inspired reality through cinema. In my work, I draw insight from the notion of narrative, content and its final construction in the medium of emakimono.

More specifically, I am interested in comparisons between the emakimono and the Photosynth. The emakimono requires human involvement in the act of rolling out the scroll to reveal its narrative. It commands a tactile relationship between the individual and scroll. Emakimono provide more than a narrative, they invite the viewer to engage on another sensory level of touch. Similarly, the Photosynth requires human interaction to reveal the narrative within the space. Individuals are invited to walk around and to move screens with their hands in order to reveal the complete narration.

It is not only the popular culture platform which acts as a reference point to my work. Historically, Western photographers in Japan were influenced by the Japanese aesthetic. For instance, Felice Beato's work in the mid- to late-1800s is heavily influenced by the common process of the ukiyo-e print, a style he embraced for its subject matter and aesthetic qualities. As Crombie (2004) states, Beato was "drawing on popular forms of local art to create images with a distinctive Japanese look" in his photography. Beato's manipulation and celebration of common, readily available photographic processes informs my work. Similarly, in modern times I am influenced by the aesthetic of Manga. I believe this is the aesthetic of the future. Borrowing, plagiarizing, and openly doing so, we are entering an exciting phase of information being readily available to the Western world. This level of superficiality of engaging with the 'other' creates an honest, entertaining, and in a sense, informative depiction of societies connecting with one another in the modern world:

200 mph super express trains blasting between arcologies through a landscape scorched by the waste heat of a hundred million air conditioning units.

Stross (2007)

There is an undeniable sense of dystopia related to Japan. There are visions of a dangerous and alienating society, which makes me think about the world we live in. Whilst Japan is shining with its technological advancements, there is still a Western obsession with otaku, murders and city fringe dwellers. I am fascinated by the conflict between the idealism I first experienced on my trip to Japan, and the inherent dystopia found in large city dwellings, which is fundamental to my artistic explorations.

By exploring all of the above through the photographic genre of portraiture, I see my work as portals to the future, the locale of Japan being the 'future'. Photography has the ability to be the perfect medium for a portal. The photograph itself, with its four edges, creates its own frame, separating the photograph from its surroundings. It allows viewers to transcend the physicality of their surroundings to the place depicted in the photograph, even if it is only for a few fleeting seconds. With the Photosynth, there is an opportunity to make these few seconds become a few minutes, a thought that excites me very much.

My artwork is ultimately about my fascination with Japan and, more broadly, comes from a universal fascination with Japan. It is an attraction which is non-repressive and all-embracing. As Dessaix (1994) declares, the "Orientalist in some grand sense, need not cover us in shame".



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